

unWANTED: Walk with Acceptance

by travelingbard

Category: My Little Pony

Genre: Adventure, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Applejack, OC, Twilight Sparkle

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2016-04-10 20:02:58

Updated: 2016-04-13 21:35:48

Packaged: 2016-04-27 19:22:17

Rating: T

Chapters: 6

Words: 24,116

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: An amnesiac human wakes up in the land of techno colored equine. With only a number for a name, Zero is taught the ways of their land and searches for himself. But when an unimaginable evil threatens to destroy his new home, he must set aside his search-of-self and answer 1 new question; What would you do to save a world you don't belong in?

1.

Prologue

Prologue

"5...

4...

3...

2...

1...

CONTACT"

The computerized voice over the PA system announced as the numbers were displayed on the big multi-screen set high on the wall so that it could be seen from every part of the room.

"Trans dimensional algorithm alignment source reached," one technician re-laid what his screen displayed. "All green across the board, Sir."

"Good," said Professor Kosciass as he walked to the technician's computer to conform this himself. He smiled at what he read and took a slip of his coffee. "Begin protocol 5 through 20, Mr. Johnson. If

everything is still green, move thought 24 up to 54."

"Yes Sir."

Johnson typed in the appropriate keys.

"All clear, Sir."

"Excellent," the satisfied Professor said, taking another sip. He walked over to his desk and typed a few keys on his computer and brought up a screen with a man in a doctor's coat.

"How is our Zero doing today, Adam?"

The doctor looked up from his computer and into the camera. "He's doing good, Psychosis. Skeletal re-structure is coming along nicely. Muscle and nerve system reconnected. His bio readings are normal. Once his memory is wiped and re-calibrated, he'll be ready for integration."

"Perfect," the Professor said, turning from the screen. He suddenly stop mid-sip and looked back at Adam. "What did you call me?" he asked.

"What, Psychosis?"

"Yeah, that. You better be spelling it 'S-Y-E-R-I-S space K-O-S-C-I-S-S'."

"You know me, Tristan. Never was good at spelling." Adam flashed his smile as he messed with his old friend.

The Professor sighed and ran a hand through his sandy blond hair. "Why do I even bother?" he muttered.

Adam's chuckling was interrupted by his phone ringing. He looked at the screen.

"Who is it?" The Professor asked.

Adam looked at the text. "It's a reminder from Sharen to pick up little Susie's cake."

Kosciss slapped his forehead. "Is that today?"

"Yeah," Adam said. "Can you believe my little girl's six alrea..." Adam was interrupted by the sound of his computer beeping. "What a minute. Brain activity just spiked. It's in the yellow."

A slight frown formed itself on Tristan's face. "What?"

Adam typed his keyboard before looking up at the camera.

"He's dreaming again."

Unusual, thought Trick, "I thought we stop that."

"I thought so too, but it looks like he just keeps bypassing the suppressants."

"Humm. Increase the voltage to 10%.

"Way ahead of ya," Adam typed the keys in,

"Activity down to half green."

"Increase to 30%."

A few seconds pass as Adam did as he was told.

"Cranial activity at full green. Subject is stabilizing. All clear," Adam said.

"Good," said the destructed Professor. _I'll look at the data once all of this is over_, he thought. He turned from the computer and pushed the button for the intercom. He picked up the mic for the facility's PA's and tapped it to make sure it was on and he cleared his voice.

"All right people, this is it. Just like the last time. Begin temporal sync dimension phase Alpha Delta."

"YES SIR!" could be heard from everywhere. The sound of keys being typed filled the room, along with voices reading out the data on everyone's screens. It was almost melodic to Tristan.

Tristan took a swig of his cup-of-Joe, smiled, and spread his arms out to take it all in. "I love this job," he said to no one in particular.

"Sir, we are ahead of schedule. The output of dimensional warp has increased to 50.5% and rising, Sir."

Tristan turned his head to find the person that said this wonderful information. It came from a women with flaming red hair in seat 12. Trick put down the mic and walked over to the screen.

"Huh," he mumbled, "This is unexpected. Count?" The Professor called out, "Count. With this new development, what is our time frame now with the warp jump?"

A tall slender man looked up from his computer and answered, "10 minutes, Sir."

"Thank you, Count," Tristan turned his attention to the red headed women sitting in front of the screen, "I haven't seen you around here before. What's your name?"

The women turned her swivel chair around to face the Professor, "Maya, Sir. Maya O'Neill. I was transferred here just this morning."

"Really? From Logistics, I presume?"

The young lady nodded in agreement.

"Well welcome Ms. O'Neill" Tristan extend his hand."May I call you Scarlet? It's your red hair, you see. It's absolutely marvelous."

Maya blushed and nodded as she shook Tristan's hand.

"Wonderful!" Tristan turned to the rest of the room and raised his voice, "Everyone? Please give a big warm welcome to Scarlet! Make her feel at home!"

The room was filled with, "Welcome, Scarlet!" and "Hi, Scarlet!" and, "I love your hair!"

But one voice shouted out something else entirely off subject.

"What was that, Mr. Hip? Speak up please," said Tristan as he cupped a hand around his ear.

"SIR! HYPER LINK JUST DROPPED TO 70%!" screamed Mr. Hip. "NOW IT'S AT 65%! 50%! 45%! IT KEEPS DROPPING, SIR!"

The room went quiet. Suddenly the alarm sounded and the computerized voice came on the PA system, "WARNING! WARNING! SUBSPACE OPTIMAL LEVELS HAVE DROPPED BELOW SAFETY PROTOCOL IN SECTION 5 THOUGH 54!"

"WHAT?" screamed Tristan as he rushed over to his desk. [i]There's only one person who can do this![/i] he thought as he brought up the feed from Zero's room. "Adam! What's happening to Zero?!"

"I don't know! His brain activity just shot through the roof! He's already passed the safety measures and bypassed the automatic shutdown system! I can't turn him off! He's resetting himself!"

"WHAT?"

The room began to shake.

"no no no NO!" yelled Tristan, slamming a fist against the desk. "Count! What the estimated time of deterioration of the dimensional jump?"

Count did his calculations and put them on the big screen.

"120 seconds" it read.

It started counting down.

Tristan swore very loudly. "Cut all power to Zero's room and the jump system before he can jump!" Trick screamed to everyone in the room. He then pointed to Adam in the box, "And get Adam out of there!"

Panic filled the room as everyone tried to find a way to stop the power. Elsewhere the security team burst through the hall doors that led to Zero's glass box of a room and began wailing on the thing. They used everything they could get their hands on; batons, portable battering rams, chairs, makeshift battering rams using desks on chairs. Nothing could penetrate the diamond like substance.

There was no progress back in the control room as Mr. Hip yelled over all the commotion, "All the shutdown circuits just turned back on!"

"What?! How?!" yelled Tristan.

"I don't know! Even the backup generators just turned on!"

"Well, where's the power going?"

Hip typed a few keys and looked up from his screen in horror. "It's going to..."he was interrupted as the tremor intensified. The lights started to pop in their sockets, sending sparks and glass everywhere.

"TO WHERE, MR. HIP!?" Tristan screamed as he covered his head.

"TRISTAN!"

Tristan turned to his computer to find that Adam was trying to get his attention. Adam pointed to a glowing Zero. Tristan finally understood what was happening.

"HE'S ABOUT TO JUMP!" he yelled. He ran out of the control room and down the hallway to Zero's room. The security team had made no progress with the glass door. Broken pieces of batons, chairs, and desks laid everywhere.

"ADAM! GET OUT OF THERE!" Tristan screamed, desperately pounding his fists against the indestructible material.

"I CAN'T! THE DOOR WON'T OPEN!" Fear had taken control Adam. He started throwing things at the glass but they just bounced back. He resorted to using his hands like his friend, but meet with the same results.

Zero's eyes flung open as he screamed in agony. His eyes and mouth emitted a blinding white light as his gold body glowed still brighter.

"13 SECONDS EVERYONE!" screamed Count over the intercom.

The noise of the tremors had risen to an almost deafening roar.

Exhausted, Tristan fell to his knees, and leaned his head against the glass. "I'm sorry, Adam!" he said through his tears. "I'm so sorry!"

"It's OK, psychosis. I'll be fine," Adam said in a calm voice. He placed his open palm on the glass in front of Tristan.

Tristan copied the action.

"Who knows?" Adam continued, "Maybe this new place will be fun." He stepped back from the glass and saluted his friend for the last time. "It's been an honor, SIR. Please take care of my family."

"I will," Tristan said. He pulled out walkie-talkie and asked count how much time there was left.

3 Seconds.

"EVERYONE HANG ON!" Tristan screamed.

Zero had reached the point of supernova brightness. Tristan peeked through his fingers and could just make out the image of Adam still saluting him.

Then Zero jumped, taking Adam and the box with him.

* * *

><p>"I FOUND HIM!"<p>

Tristan woke up to someone yelling. He opened his eyes to find that Sarge, the head of security, was leaning over him.

"Don't worry, Sir. Help is on the way."

"Uhhh." Tristan was finding it hard to breath. It felt like the 5 o'clock train blindsided him. He tried to sit up and fell back again do to the pain of this mistake.

"Hold on, Commander. You're in no shape to be moving." Sarge turned his head and yelled, "We need a medic over here!"

A man came over and dropped down to his knees. "Here you go, Sir. This'll help with the pain." The medic gave him a shot of whatever was in the syringe.

"Thank you, Wade. And thank you, Sarge," Tristan said weakly, "Now go help some other people, please, Wade. They need more help than I do."

"Yes Sir," Wade got up and headed to the other people that were calling his name.

"Thought we lost you, Commander," Sarge said in his gruff military tone. "You were right there when Zero jumped."

Tristan's whole day came rushing back to him. "You almost did. And I've told you before, Steven; please call me Tristan. I'm no Commander."

"I am sorry for you're lost, Commander," Sarge said, ignoring the order. "Adam was a good man."

"Yes he was." Tristan looked at the sky through the massive hole in the ceiling. "What am I going to tell Sharen?" he asked.

A moment of silence passed.

"SCARLET!" Tristan yelled as loud as he could, "DAMAGE REPORT!"

Scarlet came limping to him with a clip board. "Here you are, Sir."

Trick took the board and read it over. The damage was immense. The pages just kept going.

"Do we know where Zero jumped to?" asked Sarge.

Scarlet nodded, "Its on page 20."

Tristan flipped the page with a single word written right in the middle.

"Where the heck is EQUESTRIA?" Trick asked as he sounded out the unfamiliar name.

"We don't know, Sir. The power is out and all the computers are broken. We were lucky to get a name."

Tristan handed her the clipboard and said, "Get every available personal that's not dead working on another jump gate now."

"Yes Sir!" Scarlet exclaimed, hobbling away.

"Commander, shouldn't we bury our dead and contact their family's first?"

Tristan placed his hand on the sergeant's shoulder as he walked by to observe the damage.

"Right now we need to get Zero back before he does any more damage."

"Sir?"

Tristan kept walking until the tips of his shoes were hanging over the side of the crater that was once Zero's room.

"We need to get him back as soon as possible, Sarge. The residents of this "EQUESTRIA" are about to have their whole world turned upside down. They will fear him and hate him. There is no place for Zero anywhere but here."

2. Ch 1

Ch.1- Caution: Dreaming may be hazardous to your health

The sun shined bright as Princess Celestia rose it from its sleep to begin the day. The birds woke and sang their morning songs, waking the residents of Ponyville to a bright and happy existence. The rain drops from the night before glistened as the rays of the sun danced upon their surface. The apples on the trees shined their red, green, and yellow colors. The sun was waking the land. The rays of gold broke through the curtains of an orange mare's house, waking her to the best day ever. Life was good, happy, and full of life.

Applejack hated it.

"UUUUHHHHH," she moaned raising her hoof to block the light. She reached over to her night stand and looked at her clock.

6:24 a.m.

"MAAUAAH..."

It was unusual for the farm pony to hate the mornings, or even still be in bed at this time. This was the time of day when she would be working hard on the farm, bucking apples off the trees.

This morning, however, sucked.

"Bucking snakes," she said to herself, kicking the sheets off of her and swung her legs over the edge of her bed, "That stupid dream again." She rested her head in her hoofs and sat there for a moment.

"Why won't you leave?" she asked herself, tapping her head with every word.

A few more moments passed. "OK, girl. Time to get up. Let's go."

Applejack hopped off her bed and walked over to her vanity mirror. The mare staring back at her was a mess; her mane was all over the place and she looked awful, like she hadn't had a good night sleep in a couple of days. Looking closer she found dried tear streaks down her cheeks.

"Gornsarnit." She wiped the streaks away, and sat down on the pillow in front of her mirror. She picked up her brush, and started brushing out the bed knots of her mane. As the brushing became soothing, she thought of last night's dream.

* * *

><p>Her dream started out just like all the others; nice, peaceful, and right in the middle. She was on a date with HIM; Timberjack. He had taken her to the beautiful, (and stupidly expensive), Dusky Rose restaurant in Canterlot City,[i] how he got reservations at such a hurty turty place, I'll never know[i], Applejack thought. Instead of his usual plaid shirt and boots, that night Timber wore a black suit with a pristine white tie. Rarity insisted Applejack to wear the fru fru blue dress she made for her, but it was so over the top AJ had no idea where her head was supposed to go and what end her legs were meant to be. She politely declined and asked for something simple; a blue dress with a small golden necklace for the evening,

"You look absolutely beautiful, Applejack," Timber said gazing into her eyes.

Applejack blushed and turned her head away, "Ah shucks. I'm nothing special."

"I think you're the most beautiful pony in all of Equestria, Applejack," Timber reached over the table to take her hoof in he's.

"And... there's something I want to ask you."

He reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a small box.

"It's a question that I've been wanting to ask you for a long time now," he walked around the table and knelt before her.

Applejack's heart started beating so fast she thought it would burst

out of her chest.

"Applejack?" Timber said as he lifted the lid on the box.

"Yes, Timberjack?"

"Will you die for me?"

"Wha..."

Black vine-like sludge exploded from the jewelry box and wrapped around her. She screamed and tried to pull free but the vines were too strong, even for her. The restaurant scene melted into nothingness and all that was left was Timberjack and her.

Timber changed as he slowly walked towards her. He got taller, and more slender. His smile grew unnaturally big for his face. His black suit crept around his body until he was as black as their surroundings.

But his eyes were the worst change. His eyes melted off into a pool at his hoofs and were replaced by gleaming red sockets, full of evil.

Applejack struggled against the vines and managed to pull one hoof free. But the vines didn't seem to like that. The tips of the vines grew snake-like-heads and bite deep into her flesh and their grip on her tightened more.

"Now now, my dear sweet Applejack," Timber chortled. His voice sounded like glass scraping across a chalkboard, "I can't have you leave just yet. Not before we have some FUN first."

Timber walked up to her and ran his hoof across her face and down to her chest. He grabbed her dress and ripped it off, flinging it into the void.

"Don't worry, sweetheart," Timber's smile grew even wider and he leaned his whole body against hers, "It'll be fun."

* * *

><p>Applejack stopped brushing and looked at the mare staring back at her. Silent tears were rolling down the mare's cheeks from her sad emerald eyes.<p>

Why? Applejack thought, _Why won't that dream just go away?_

The mare gave no reply.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

"Applejack? Ya'll up?" asked a deep voice from the other side of her door.

"Yeah!" she sniffed and wiped the freshly made tears away again, "Yeah! I'm up, Big Mac!"

"OK!" Big Mac said, "Breakfast is ready!"

"Be down in a minute!"

The sound of her brothers hoof steps grew small and smaller as he descended the stairs. She turned back to her mirror and finished with her brushing. When that was done, she tied it back into a pony tail and grabbed her hat from its hook on the wall.

She walking to her door then stopped to take one more look at the mare in the mirror.

Don't worry, the mare said.

Applejack said nothing as she walked out of the room into the real world.

* * *

><p>Walking down the stairs was a lot harder this morning for some reason. Each step hurt.<p>

That stupid dream really did me in this time, thought Applejack as she descended the troublesome steps.

"NUUH! Stupid legs! Work already!"

She finally reached the bottom without falling this time. Every other morning the stairs would trip and almost kill her.

[i]Guess they decided to skip it today [/i].

A small little yellow filly with a big red bow in her red mane came from the kitchen and asked, "Ya'll OK, Applejack?"

Applejack took a couple deep breaths.

"I'm fine, Apple Bloom. Don't you worry none about your big sis. My legs are just still asleep, that's all."

Apple Bloom looked at her with her big eyes. Her sister never was good at lying.

"Ya sure, Applejack? You don't look too good."

"I said I'm fine!" snapped Applejack.

Apple Bloom stepped back a bit.

"Oh, sugar cube," Applejack went over and hugged her little sister, "I'm sorry. I'm just hungry, that's all."

"It's OK, sis," Apple Bloom said, hugging back her big sister back, "Big Mac made breakfast! Come on! Let's go eat!"

Applejack walked into the dining room to find Granny Smith and Big Mac at the table waiting for her.

"Mornin' y'all," Applejack said.

"Mornin', Applejack," Big Mac said in his usual taciturn voice.

"Well, mornin' to ya too, young'n," Granny Smith said in her shaky voice, "Ya sleep well?"

"Yep! Slept like a log," Applejack lied. _Hopefully that'll pass by Granny_, she thought.

"Good. Good. Well, come sit and have some breakfast, young'n," Granny Smith waved her hoof to the chair next to her.

Applejack took her seat. THEN she noticed the food. There was a lot of it; pancakes, scrambled eggs, toast, hay bacon, hash browns, apple juice, orange juice, milk, oatmeal; it was never ending.

"A lot of food for just a normal day, don't ya think Mac?" Applejack said raising an eyebrow.

Big Mac stopped pouring Granny her drink to look at his sister with a confused look on his face. "Nope," he simply said.

"Yeah," chimed in Apple Bloom with her own confused look, "Arn't ya'll meetin' up with Twilight and the others for the Grand Galloping Gala for tonight?"

"OH DAGNABIT! I completely forgot!" Applejack exclaimed. She was supposed to meet her friends at the Spa at noon before Rarity had them try on the dresses she made for them for the Gala.

She looked at the clock; 6:50 am.

She grabbed a pancake, stuck some eggs, toast, hash browns and some hay bacon and wrapped it all into breakfast burrito monstrosity thing. She grabbed the orange juice pitcher and guzzled it down as she hurried from the table.

"Big Mac, could ya bring the big wagon around the front of the barn by 11? I should be done with the north half of the apple orchard by then," she said with her panrito off to one corner of her mouth.

"Yup."

"Thanks! See y'all later!" She raced out the door to finish her work.

"Bye sweetie!" Granny said smiling and waving to her, "Have fun tonight!"

When Applejack was out of sight, Granny's smile faded into a worried look. "That pony's gettin' worse for ware everyday now. It's not like her to forget a get together with her friends."

"Yup", Mac agreed with her.

There was a moment of silence at the table.

"It was that dream again, wasn't it?" Apple Bloom asked.

No pony answered, but they all knew that it was.

"I knew she was lyin' this mornin'," Apple Bloom said. "She ain't fine! I heard her tossin' and turnin' and yellin' last night!"

Big Mac broke the glass he was holding and his usual calm demeanor suddenly turned very dark.

"I heard her cryin' when I came in last night. If I ever find the colt who did this to my sister..."

Granny and Apple Bloom knew exactly what would happen.

"Wait a minute," Apple Bloom said, "How did you know she was..." Then it hit her and she smiled despite the mood in the room.

"OOOOOOHHHHHHHH! You were out late with Ms. Cheerilee again, weren't ya?" she asked.

Big Mac's blushed cheeks conformed the question.

"Nn...nope," he lied.

"HA! You were!" Apple Bloom yelled, pointing an accusing hoof at her brother. "Where'd ya two go? Was it romantic? Did she like it?" Apple Bloom started firing off her questions so fast it made her big brother's head spin.

Mac grabbed his food, stuffed his face, and ran out the door without answering of his sister's intense questioning.

"That boy needs ta colt up and marry that Ms. Cheerilee," Granny said.

"Eeeyup!" Apple Bloom agreed with her granny in her best impression she could do.

* * *

><p>Finished her panrito, Applejack opened the doors to the barn and got to work. She found the cart with the wooden buckets in it and hooked herself to the cart. She pulled it outside as Winona came bounding to her.<p>

"Hey there, girl" Applejack said, petting the faithful dog on the head. "Come on, girl! Let's go buck some apples!" The two of them trotted off to the north half of Sweet Apple Acres, with Winona bounding the entire way.

As Aj walked she took in the sight of her family farm. She breathed in the cool morning air. It felt nice to be out. Being cooped up in that room of hers was starting to get to her.

She finally made it to her destination and unhooked herself. She grabbed a few wooden buckets and placed them around the tree and got to work.

"OK girl," Applejack said, psyching herself up, "you can do this! You've done this thousands of times! Today's no different!"

She backed up to the tree, reared up on her front legs, tucked her

back legs in and with all her strength kicked the tree. The sweet fruits of the tree fell into the buckets around it with a satisfying sound.

"At'a girl", the satisfied farm pony said. She walked over to the other trees and fell into her usual apple bucking routine; buckets, buck, move apple buckets. When the buckets were all full, she loaded them up in the cart and took it back to drop it off back at the barn. She grabbed another cart and did the whole routine again. She kept working like this until all of the buckets and carts were full.

"WHEW!" she said, taking off her hat and wiped the sweat from her brow, "That was a work out! What time is it?"

She looked up and judged the time based on where the sun was. At least 4 hour's had passed by.

"I reckon I could take a little rest before I meet the girls."

Before she took the last cart of the day back to the barn, she grabbed an apple from one of the buckets and walked over to one of her favorite trees on the property. She climbed the tree and rested herself in a nook where the thick tree branch meet with the trunk. The nook was perfect. The branch was wide enough to sit in comfortably and was grooved slightly inward. The trunk was grooved inward too. The whole this was like a chair made naturally. The tee was on top of the hill, so naturally it had the best view Ponyville.

Applejack sat there, eating her apple and watched the scenery of her town. It was almost noon so Ponyville was buzzing with activity. Pony's were walking around buying or selling things. Pegasi were flying around moving the clouds. Off in the distance she could make out a city on the side of the mountain; Canlerlot, the capital of Equestria. That was where the princesses of Equestria, Princess Celestia and Luna, the two sisters, reigned of the ponies of the land.

Applejack crossed her legs and rested a hoof behind her head. She threw the rest of the apple into her mouth and her eyes were drawn to Ponyville's own castle. It looked, for all intents and purpose, like a big purpleish blueish crystal tree castle. The castle for The Kingdom of Friendship belonged to her close and personal friend; Twilight Sparkle, Princess of Friendship.

To be perfectly honest, that is a strange title, Applejack said to herself, even though Applejack did have a throne in that same castle herself.

A yawn escaped her lips. "Boy, I'm plum tired. All that work tukered my out." She made herself more comfortable on the tree and tilted her hat forward to cover most of her face, "Well, might as well rest up a bit, gettin' ready for the big shin dig tonight and all." She closed her eyes and listened to the sound of birds singing in the distance and felt the soft gentle breeze against her skin. It was good to be out.

* * *

><p>"AHHHHHH!" Applejack screamed and jerked awake, almost falling out of her tree. Her hat was not so lucky. It fell to the ground, crumpling up one of its sides. Winona shot straight up and whorled around to look for the potential enemy.<p>

Applejack placed her head in her hoof and sobbed, "I can't even take a nap anymore without dreaming!" she screamed in between her gasping for air.

"APPLEJACK! APPLEJACK! WHERE ARE YA?!" a voice yelled in the distance.

Applejack took a couple of deep breaths to calm herself, "I'm... I'm here, Apple Bloom. Up in the tree," she managed to say, wiping the tears away. She had to be strong for her little sister.

Apple Bloom rushed over to see Applejack's tree. "Ya'll OK, Applejack?" she asked looking up at her.

"I'm fine, Apple Bloom," Applejack lied. She'd been doing that a lot lately.

"Ya sure, sis?" the concerned sibling asked, picking up Applejack's hat. "Ya almost fell out of the tree."

Applejack jumped down and landed with a thud in front of her sister.

"I'm sure, Apple Bloom!" Applejack said, grabbing her hat from her sister's mouth more forcefully than she meant to, " 'Sides, it's only a few feet of the ground. It wouldn't have hurt if I fell." She knew it was higher than that but she wouldn't admit that she almost died today.

"Anyway Apple Bloom, what are y'all doing here? I thought ya were meetin' up with Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle."

"I am, but Big Mac told me to find ya and tell ya your late meetin' y'all's friends."

"What?" Applejack yelled and then put a hoof to her head to make it not spin so much. "UUHHH. I ain't feeling to good. Maybe I shouldn't go toni..."

"NO!" Apple Bloom cut her off, "Ya have ta go! All ya friends are goin'! Me and Sweetie Belle and Scootallo are goin' be there too! Remember that talent contest show the school had a few days ago?"

Applejack thought of the talent show and what the Cutie Mark Crusaders did for it. "Y'all almost died when your stage props fell apart, Apple Bloom," Applejack said sternly.

"No I didn't! We were fine! Anyway, the prize for 'Best Comedy Act' was three golden tickets to the Grand Galloping Gala!"

"Oh yeah" Applejack paused. "Wait. I didn't know you three were doing a comedy act."

"We weren't. It was supposed to be a musical." Apple Bloom said somewhat sadly. She snapped back to reality, "But that's not the point! The point is this is my first Gala and I want to have fun! And I won't have fun without my sister! Y'all been there before and had a great time!"

Applejack cringed a bit as she thought about her first Gala. It didn't go quite as planned.

"Pleeeeeeease!?" the insistent filly said.

"Alright! Alright, I'll go." Applejack said.

"YEA!" Apple Bloom exclaimed hugging her sister. Then she gasped, "Ya gotta' get going then, AJ! Its half past noon!"

"Oh Tartar sauce!" Applejack turned and ran down the hill towards Ponyville and hopped the fence. She turned back to wave to her sister, "I'll see ya at the Gala, sis!"

"Bye! See ya then!" Apple Bloom waved and yelled back.

When Applejack was out of sight, Apple Bloom lowered her hoof and thought of what she just did. She knew Applejack wasn't fine at all. Apple Bloom knew her sister needed to be with her friends and to have a good time. Maybe this'll bring back her sister. Make her better.

"I gotta go too!" she thought, "Sweetie and Scoots 'ill kill me if I'm late!"

She ran off in the direction of the Carousel Boutique to get ready for the night in Canterlot.

* * *

><p>Applejack ran across town to the Day Spa and burst thought the doors, surprising Lotus Blossom and Aloe at the receptionist's desk.<p>

"Oh, Miss Applejack! Welcome!" she said in her accent.

"Sorry about that," the orange mare said, winded from her run.

"You're friends are already here," Aloe said, coming around the counter, "Please follow me."

Applejack followed Aloe to the back of the place to join her friends. When they reached the doors to the hot tub Aloe opened them and stood aside. "Here you are ma'am. Enjoy," she said, bowing to Applejack.

"Thankin' ya kindly, Aloe," Applejack said. She walked into the room and was immediately tackled by a pink blur thing.

"APPLEJACK! YOU'RE HERE!" the pink thing said as it gave Applejack a hug that would crush an Ursa major.

"Hi Pinkie," Applejack said as the hug got tighter, "It's nice to see

you too, but could you let go please? You're crushing me!"

"Oops! Sorry!" Pinkie Pie said as she let go of the slightly blue orange mare. "I'm just so excited that we're all here and we're going to the Grand Galloping Gala and we're going to have the best time ever not like the first time when we went but this time it'll be better than ever!" Pinkie Pie had started talking a million miles an hour and started bouncing around the place, even off the walls and ceiling.

"Hey! Is that Applejack? Hi Applejack!" A blue Pegasus with a rainbow colored mane and tail was face down in a massage chair. She waved in Applejack's general direction. "Glad you made it! Ah yeah. Little lower. To the left," The blue Pegasus let out a satisfied sound as the masseuse worked on her wings, "Yeah. Right there. That's the spot."

"Howdy Rainbow Dash," Applejack picked up her fallen hat and placed it on the coat rack by the door, "I thought y'all be with the Wonderbolts gettin' ready for tonight."

"And miss a chance to hang out with the gang? No way! Little to your right." Another satisfied sound came from Rainbow Dash.

"Besides," a small and tentative voice said from the hot tube, "It's been ages since we've all been together."

"I quite agree, Fluttershy."

Applejack turned to see what looked like a bee hive head, green faced, cucumber eyes thing in the mud bath.

"I knew, right?"

This comment came from a purple mare in the second mud bath next to the first, "You've been busy with your clothing line, Rarity," she gestured to the pony in the first mud bath.

Applejack made her way to the big hot tub and sat across from Fluttershy.

"I've almost finished up my Spring Line Up," Rarity said, "But what about you, Twilight?"

"What do you mean?" the purple mare in the other mud bath said.

"What do you mean, "What do i mean"?!"

Rarity took off her cucumbers and looked Twilight in the eyes, "You have a kingdom to run as the Princess of Friendship!"

Rarity bowed as well as she could in her mud bath, along with every other pony in the room. Even Rainbow Dash turned around and half-bowed, half-almost-fell-off the chair. Pinkie stopped her bouncing and bowed on the ceiling.

Twilight blushed a deep red, "Oh, come on girls. I've asked you before not to do that. Besides, you all have thrones too."

It was true. The castle created by the chest from the Tree of Harmony had six thrones in it. "We do have thrones," Fluttershy said as she looked up from her bow, "but we all have other responsibility. We can't just sit in them and do nothing all day."

"Yeah!" Pinkie said as she came off the ceiling and landed in the hot tube. She hardly made a splash. "Besides; The map hasn't lead us anywhere for a while anyway! I've got parties to throw and the cake twins to watch every now and again!"

"I've got my apples ta buck," Applejack chimed in.

"And I have my animals to take care of," Fluttershy said.

"And Discord," Rainbow Dash snickered.

"Rainbow Dash!" Twilight scolded her.

"What?"

"Oh, it's OK Twilight. Discords not so bad anymore," Fluttershy blushed so red that Applejack was sure the hot tube's temperature rose up a bit.

"Honestly, Fluttershy. You could have any colt in Ponyville. In Equestria! I don't know what you see in that ... beast," scoffed Rarity.

"He's changed after Tirek betrayed him. He's a lot better now." Fluttershy got a faraway look as she sighed, "He's kind, strong, handsome..." She sighted again.

"Uh, Fluttershy?" Applejack asked.

"Yes?" Fluttershy asked dreamly.

The other ponies laugh a little.

"Is he meetin' ya at the Gala tonight?"

"Yes," Fluttershy answered, still in her own little world.

"Gee, Fluttershy," Rainbow dash said, "If you like him so much, why don't cha marry him?"

This question brought Fluttershy back to reality. "WHAT?!"

"RAINBOW DASH!" scolded Twilight.

"What?" Rainbow said, "What I say?"

"Ma...mama...marriage?" Fluttershy stammered, "I...I...I..." she started to hyperventilate.

"Easy, EASY there girl," Applejack moved over to her yellow friend and rubbed her back to calm her, "Easy. Ain't no pony sayin' ya have to marry Discord." She threw Rainbow Dash a look that could cower a bull.

"Sorry Fluttershy," Rainbow said, "I was just joking."

"It's...it's OK." Fluttershy was calming down.

Applejack patted gently on the back, "Atta girl." She turned to the other girls and changed the subject. "So who ya'll going with?"

"I'm going with Cheese Sandwich!" exclaimed Pinkie. She began her bouncing again, only faster this time.

"How is he, by the way?" asked Twilight.

"He's great!" Pinkie said excitedly. "I just got a letter from him today saying he's meeting me at the Grand Galloping Gala!" Pinkie was started to turn into a blur.

"How is your long distance relationship with him, anyway?" Rainbow Dash asked, returning to her position on her massage chair.

Pinkie stopped bouncing around and looked down sadly at her hoofs. "Not so good," she finally said, her usual fluffy out-of-control pink mane deflate.

"What do you mean, darling?" Rarity took of her cucumbers again and looked at the sad party pony. "He hasn't been ... unfaithful to you, has he?"

"Oh no! It's not that! It's just that I don't get to see him as often as I'd like to," Pinkie sniffle a bit. She finally came down from the wall. "But I know he has to follow his Cheese Senses and make the best parties everywhere he goes. It just gets to me sometimes."

The other ponies in the room crowded around the sad pink mare into one big group hug, giving her reassurance. Rarity quickly washed herself off of the mud and joined her friends.

Rainbow Dash's masseuse excused herself to leave the 6 best friends alone.

"Thanks girls. You're the best friends a girl could ask for," Pinkie said. The group broke up and Pinkie turned to Rainbow Dash. "What about you, Dash?"

Rainbow walked a little away from the group and looked sad. "Oh, I'm not going with anypony..." she paused as a huge smile crept on to her face, "ANYPONY BUT MY COLTFRIEND!" she squealed with glee.

The 6 friends were stunned for a moment. Then it hit them and they all squealed in excitement with Rainbow. Pinkie's mane instantly inflated back to its original out of control state.

Everypony crowded around Rainbow and started talking all at once.

"Who is it? What's he like? When did he ask? How long have you to been together? When did this happen?"

"Whoa girls! WHOA!" Rainbow said, "One at a time!"

"Who is he?" Twilight asked.

"Soarin from my squad."

"When did he ask?" Pinkie asked.

"About a week ago."

"How did he ask you?" Rarity asked.

"We were practicing our fly-by for the Gala. After we were done for the day, he took me to watch the sun set on a set of clouds. After a few minutes of just watching the sun set, he told me he liked me." Rainbow Dash was blushing now. "He said he's liked me since the day he saw me. He leaned over and gave me a kiss and asked me to be his marefriend."

Everypony "AWWW"ed at this.

"Rainbow Dash has her first coltfriend!" Pinkie Pie yelled, "THIS CALLS FOR A CELEBRATION!" She pulled her infamous party cannon out of nowhere and aimed it at Rainbow Dash.

"Wait Pinkie DON..." Rainbow was cut off from her protest as the cannon went off, showering her with balloons, streamers, and confetti. Pinkie had somehow stuffed a huge "CONGRATULATION!" banner in there and it flew to the wall behind Rainbow Dash and unfurled its self.

Pinkie started to sing, like she always did when she was overly exited.

"Congratulation Rainbow!

Congratulation Dash!

You found yourself a coltfriend!

We know that it will last!"

"So, Rarity," Applejack said as the pink party pony continued to sing, "How are you and Spike?"

Rarity blushed and looked away. "We're doing fine, darling."

"Have you heard from him yet?" Twilight asked. "It's been 2 weeks since his last letter."

"No dear. I haven't," Rarity said, "And it's been a month since my little Spikey-Wikey's last visit."

"He's not so little anymore," giggled Pinkie. She had finished her song and joined in the conversation.

"He'll always be my little Spikey-Wikey to me," Rarity blushed, "But enough about me. Twilight," she turned to the lavender princess, "I heard that you and Flash Sentry were seen at the Caf  yesterday."

"WHAT?" Twilight yelled, losing her calm princess self, "I cast a perfect illusion spell so no pony could tell it was us! WHO TOLD YOU THIS?"

"You just did, my dear," Rarity said before she burst into laughter, along with everypony else.

Twilight blushed. "That's not funny, Rarity," Twilight said, pouting at the fact she was tricked.

"Oh lighten up, Twilight," Rainbow Dash said, "That was pretty good. Nice on Rarity." She high hoofed Rarity.

"So tell us, Twilight," Fluttershy said after she calmed down with her laughing, "What's it like dating a royal guard?"

"To be honest, it's tough." Twilight said. "My royal duties as "The Princess of Friendship" means I have no peace for myself. I can't walk 5 steps without somepony yelling, "Princess Twilight! The ambassador of so-and-so is here and we need you to go and have him thank you for saving his country from Tirek!" or "Princess Twilight! We need you to wave at some important ponies!" or my favorite, "Princess Twilight! There's a small inconsequential problem only you can fix!"! I had 3 of those this week!" Twilight was basically foaming at the mouth at this point.

"Whoa there, girl," Applejack said.

Twilight's eyes refocused and blushed from embarrassment of losing her cool. "But I digress. Every free time I have I spend with him, whether it's a few minutes or a few hours. Yesterday we went to the Café and just talked about everything; the weather, the Gala, Ponyville, Cantalot, everything. He talked about being in the royal guard and how hard it was to sneak away with me to go on our little dates." She giggled at this.

"But wait, Twi," interjected Applejack, "Isn't playin' hooky for him and you really bad?"

"I told him that but he just laughed it off and said all he does ever since he got transferred here is patrolling the castle grounds. He also told me that the Court-martial would be worth it if he ever got caught."

The girls "AWWW"ed again.

"So wait. Back up a bit," Rainbow said. "You had to use a spell to go to the Café?"

"Yes. I used a spell that changed our appearance."

"Like a changeling?"

"Kind of. See, I found a book by Star Swirl the Bearded and he found that the changelings used a form of Illusion spell that..." Twilight started rambling off all that she learned from her book.

"I'm sure the spell was a work of art, dear..." Rarity interrupted, "...but why did you use it in the first place?"

"So we could walk around without everypony bowing to me. You know how I feel about that. It was also for Flash so he wouldn't get in trouble. You 5 are the only ones who knows about me and

Flash."

"That is just adorable!" squealed Rarity, giving her purple friend a hug.

"So, is he meeting you there or is he taking you?" asked Pinkie Pie.

"Actually I'M taking him. He's part of my entourage."

"We'll, we can't keep him waiting!" Rarity said as she took off her bee hive towel and shook her lavender mane out. It flowed out and curled perfectly.

"Come on girls! I have new dresses for you! Let's look fabulous for our dates tonight!" she said, rallying the troop.

"Yeah!" cried the ponies.

The 6 best friends grabbed their stuff and started heading for the door. Twilight used her magic to clean up the confetti and balloons as she walked by. Applejack grabbed her hat from the coat rack.

"Wait Rarity," Applejack said. "What about your date?"

"Oh don't worry about me. My heart belongs to Spike and Spike alone." She stopped and turned to face Applejack. "But what about you, dear? Will you be all right? Last time you went to the Gala..."

"I'm fine, Rarity. I ain't lookin' for a coltfriend. Last time... was a mistake."

"Alright, dear. I'm just making sure. I don't want my friend to get hurt again."

"Thank's for lookin' out for me, Rar, but I'll be fine. I'm going with friends tonight."

"Alright Applejack. I won't bother you with it again." Rarity said and hugged her friend. "Come on. The others are leaving us behind. Wait up girls!" Rarity ran off to catch up.

Applejack slowly walked behind her as she was absorbed in her thoughts. _Last time was a mistake_, she thought._I went to the Gala and found_... Applejack fought back the tears that were coming. _No! Not this time! As Celestia as my witness I will have the best night ever!_

"APPLEJACK! YOU COMING?" Rainbow said.

"COMIN'!" Applejack replied and ran after her friends.

3. Ch 2

CH. 2- Tonight Stinks. Tomorrow ain't lookin' too good either

As the carriage pulled the girls down the road on it's six hour drive to Canterlot, the girls took this time to catch up with each

other.

"So Twilight," Rarity said, "Give us all the juicy details on your relationship with Flash."

"Well, as I've said before it's tough. He's got his duties as the royal announcer and he's part of my entourage. I have my princess duties too. We just see each other when we can."

"Well at least you can see him whenever you want," Rarity said, "I only get to see Spike once a month." Rarity looked sad.

Applejack got up from her seat and went over to comfort the white unicorn. "Ah don't worry," she said hugging her friend and sitting down next to her, "Spike'll come visitin' soon. Just hang in there, girl."

There was a moment of awkward silence.

"Rarity, these dresses are incredible," piped up Twilight, changing the subject.

"Yeah Rarity, their beautiful," Fluttershy added. "You're the best seamstress in Equestria."

"Yup!" Pinkie exclaimed, hopping up and down.

"Oh girls please. You've been saying that for the last hour," Rarity said, forgetting the subject on Spike and blushing at the complement.

"And we'll keep sayin' it 'till the cows come home," Applejack said, "Thanks Rarity."

"THANK YOU!" Pinkie yelled, hugging her friend.

"You are all very welcome, but could you not do that Pinkie? You're messing up my mane!"

"Oops! Sorry."

Pinkie released Rarity and sat back down next to Fluttershy. Rarity fixed her already perfect mane. "I do wish Rainbow Dash stayed and at least tried on her dress. I worked so hard on it."

"She has to fly with the Wonderbolts tonight," Twilight said. "Besides, her uniform is more aerodynamic then the dress."

"I know, but still..." Rarity's bottom lip protruded out into a pout.

"Ah don't pout, Rarity," Applejack slung her arm around her friend, "Give it to her after she's done flyin'. She'll love it."

"But... I left her dress back at the Boutique."

"You mean this one?" Pinkie asked, pulling a rainbow colored themed dress from her curly pink mane.

Everypony just stared at her in amazement.

"Pinkie Pie, When... how...?" Rarity was too stunned to make a complete sentence.

"I just followed my Pinkie Sense!" Pinkie exclaimed.

"... What?" asked Twilight, still shocked at how Pinkie got a dress to fit in her mane.

"My Pinkie Sense! You know, the twitchy twitches I get that predict the future?"

"Yeah, we know. What about em this time?" asked Applejack.

"Well, my nose twitched a bit and my left hind hoof twitched. That means somepony will need something later. NOW if my left hind hoof twitched THEN my nose, that means somepony needs a cupcake! Kind of like now!"

As if on cue her leg twitched and she winkled her nose. She reached into her mane again and pulled out a cupcake and hoofed it over to Fluttershy.

"Oh... I'm not hun..." Fluttershy began, but her stomach decided to interrupt her. She blushed, "Well... maybe just a bit." She took the cupcake and nibbled on it.

"Wow Pinkie. How d' ya do that?" Applejack asked

"Pinkie sense, AJ. Madame Pinkie knows all."

"No, not that. How d'ya fit the dress in ya mane?"

"Oh that? I've got all kinds of things up in here." Pinkie started to rummaged through her hair. "I've got cupcakes, streamers, extra balloons, emergency noise makers, confetti balls for my party cannon..."

"Wait. You keep your party cannon in your mane?" asked Twilight incredulity.

"Of course not, silly! It's way too heavy for my mane! I keep it here!" Pinkie turned in her seat and pulled her infamous party cannon.

Rarity leaned over to Applejack and whispered, 'How did she do that?_'

'It's Pinkie Pie, Applejack answered, as if that said it all. They shared a giggle.

'Look at Twilight's face,' Rarity said.

Applejack turned and saw Twilight's face as she tried to figure out how Pinkie could fit a party cannon between herself and the wall of the carriage.

Applejack and Rarity tried to stifle their giggles.

"What's so funny?" the perplexed princess asked.

"Nothing... nothing Twi." Applejack tried to say in between her laughter.

"It's ok Twilight," Fluttershy said, trying not to laugh herself when she saw Twilight's face, "Pinkie is just Pinkie."

Rarity, Applejack, and Fluttershy exploded in a fit of laughter. Twilight joined them after figuring out what the subject was.

"HAHAHAHAH! WHAT ARE WE LAUGHING ABOUT?" Pinkie asked as she too joined in with her friends.

"Nothing... Darling... nothing at... all," a winded Rarity said between gasps of air.

"WOO! THIS CALLS FOR A CELEBRATIONS! FRIENDS LAUGHING TOGETHER AGAIN!" Pinkie exclaimed, raising a hoof to the ceiling before bringing it down on the firing mechanism her party cannon.

"WAIT NO PINKIE NOT IN..." Twilight was too late. The party cannon shot streamers, confetti, and balloons everywhere. The carriage jumped about a foot off the ground.

The action of the cannon threw the 5 friends into a panic of shrieking laughter.

"Crazy ponies," one of the guards pulling the carriage said.

"Yeah," The other guard agreed, "We're not even at the Gala yet and their already going nuts."

"Probably because they haven't seen each other in a long time," another guard said.

"Yeah. Celestia know's how long I haven't seen my friends," the first guard said. "Can't wait 'till my shift is over."

"Then let's get these girls and the princess to the Gala!" an orange Pegasus said from the front of the group.

"YES SIR!" the guards said and quickened their pace.

* * *

><p>Applejack and the gang were just about done cleaning the confetti off of themselves when there was a knock at the carriage door.<p>

"Princess Twilight; My Lady's" a voice said as the door opened, "We have arrived."

Twilight was the first to step out. "Watch your step, your Highness," the orange Pegasus said as he reached a hoof out to help the princess step down. "You look beautiful tonight, your Highness," he added.

"Thank you, Flash," Twilight said, blushing at his complement. She turned to face her friends as they exited the carriage. "All right

girls! Let's have the best night ever!" Everypony agreed to this statement with "whoops" and "yeahs".

The girls took in the sight as they waded down the road to the castle. Ponies from all over were flowing through the gates of Canterlot, the city on the side of the mountain. As they walked across the draw bridge leading up to the huge double doors that lead to the road to the castle, Applejack turned to see the pool that the waterfalls from above made. "It sure is beautiful tonight," she commented.

"Oh I know! Isn't it just?" Rarity said. "Especially with this view! You can see Ponyville from up here!"

Applejack turned and saw the view Rarity was talking about. Far down below was Ponyville. It looked so small. Applejack squinted her and could just make out her barn on Sweet Apple Acres. What a view.

"Hey," Pinkie Pie said as they continued down the road, "Look!"

Applejack turned back to see what Pinkie Pie was talking about when Rarity gasped and ran towards the figure in the road.

"SPIKE!" she screamed, colliding into the dragon. She knock him to the ground and rolled with him, kissing him all along the way.

"Hey...Rar...ity...nice...to...see...", Spike tried to finish his sentence, but the kissing kept cutting him off. "I need to breathe Rarity!" he finally managed to say, gently pushing her off of him.

"Spike!" the rest of the group caught up with him.

"Hey, girls," Spike said, hugging each one of his closest friend, "It's good to be back."

"Good to have you back, Spike," Twilight said, "Where have you been?"

"You know I can't answer that," Spike said.

"Spikey-Wikey?" Rarity said with a sweet voice.

"Yes Rarity?"

They both stared deeply into each other's eyes.

"I've missed you so..."

SMACK!

Spikes sentence was interrupted by the sound of Rarity's very well manicured hoof colliding with the side of Spikes face.

"TWO MONTHS!" Rarity yelled at him. "YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR TWO MONTHS AND YOU NEVER WROTE WHY IN YOUR LETTERS!" She slapped him again. "YOUR LETTERS BECAME SHORTER AND SHORTER!" Tears started to stream

down her face now, washing her mascara away. "YOU DIDN'T EVEN BOTHER SAYING GOOD BYE THE LAST TIME YOU LEFT!" She was in hysterics now and was attracting quite the crowd. "I...I thou...thought...you...were...were...dead...I thought...you...you were...se...seeing...another... mare..."

Rarity's broken sentence was interrupted as Spike pulled her close and kissed her.

"Rarity," he finally said as he pulled his lips from hers, "I'm so sorry I've been gone for so long." He kissed her again. "But you listen to me, Rarity," He brushed a loose strand of her mane out of her eye, "Not a moment has past in the last 3 years that I didn't think of you. I would never ever look at another mare the way I look at you. There is no mare in all of Equestria more beautiful then you." He kissed her again.

The crowd "AWWWW"ed at this and Rarity seemed to have calmed down a bit.

"OH, look at me," Rarity said, sniffing and wiping her face with a hoof, "I look awful now."

"You could never look awful," Spike said, kissing her again.

The two walked off down the road and into the main hall of the castle, leaving the group behind.

"Wow," Twilight said. "I had no idea Rarity was keeping all THAT in."

"Me neither," Fluttershy said.

"Your highness," Flash Sentry bowed said, "Princess Celestia is..."

"...WAITING FOR ME IN THE FORYA! OH MY GOSH, I FORGOT!" Twilight ran down the walkway with her entourage close on her heels. She turned her head and said back to her friends, "I'LL SEE YOU GIRLS IN THERE!"

The friends waved goodbye until Twilight ran into the castle and out of sight.

"Hey," Applejack said, "Why didn't we go with her?"

Fluttershy looked like she was about to ask the same question when something caught her eye. She turned bright red and started walking towards a very strange creature in the road.

"... Cause I want to see this," Pinkie Pie said, pulling a cupcake from her mane and taking a bite. "Want one?" she pulled out another one and offered it to Applejack.

"Eh, no thanks, Pinkie."

Pinkie shrugged and popped it into her mouth and turned back to the scene at hoof.

"Hello, my dear Fluttershy," The tall, strange looking creature in

the road said.

"Hello, Discord," Fluttershy said with a small voice. "You look nice tonight."

"Well thank you, Fluttershy," Discord said. "But you, my dear," he leaned down and gently raised her chin, "are more beautiful than a chaotic Monday morning."

'What?' Applejack whispered to Pinkie Pie. 'What kind of a complement was that?'

Fluttershy, however, blushed an even deeper red. "Really?" she asked, looking up at the Draconequus.

Discord leaned in and whispered, "I would never lie to you, my dear." He kissed her to prove his point.

'Apparently a good one,' Pinkie whispered back.

Discord picked up his love with his mismatched arms and carried her through the doors into the castle.

"They are so CUTE TOGETHER!" Pinkie yelled as she and Applejack followed the odd couple into the castle. Overhead a sonic rainboom exploded in the sky, signaling the official start of the Gala

"Yeah, they are," agreed Applejack, "But I thought Fluttershy was still mad at Discord. You know, about the whole 'betraying everypony for power' thing with Tirek."

"Guess she forgave him," Pinkie said.

The two had reached the stairs where Princess Celestia and Twilight were greeting the guest. Twilight had just finished bowing to one guest when she noticed her friends. She waved to them enthusiastically. Celestia noticed the two also and bowed her head slightly.

Applejack waved to Twilight and started to head towards her when she noticed Pinkie Pie just standing and looking around.

"You OK, sugar cube?" she asked her pink friend.

"Cheese said he would be here, but I don't see him." Pinkie said with a look of worry on her face. Rarity would have flipped her lid if she saw her masterpiece of a mane style, (especially since Pinkie's mane obeys to no pony), deflating like a balloon's air being let out.

"Ah, don't worry, sugar cube," Applejack walked back over and put a reassuring arm around her worried friend. "Why I bet he's coming down the road right now and..."

As if on cue, a figure in the ugliest Hawkinny tee shirt anypony had ever seen burst through the doors and screamed, "PINKIE PIE!"

"CHEESE!" Pinkie Pie yelled excitedly, her mane poofing back to its original state. She ran towards him in a pink blur, expertly dodging

around the ponies that were between her and her colt. Suddenly, Pinkie leaped into the air and rocketed straight towards Cheese.

Cheese was ready for her, though, and at the last second he expertly caught her in mid air and spun with her before he finished her off with a dip.

"Hey there, Pinkie," he said, "Sorry I'm late."

"Nope!" Pinkie twisted in his grip and turned him around and dipped him, "Your right on time!" They both looked into each other's eyes and kissed. The two love birds then skipped away, hoof-in-hoof to the grand hall.

Applejack sighed sadly.

She was now alone.

"WOW! That was a site to see!"

Applejack was startled by the voice and whirled around so fast her hat came off.

"Pardon me, madame. I did not mean to startle you."

The voice belong to a white unicorn with a blue mane, tail, eyes, and a mustache. He's horn glowed yellow as he magically picked up the fallen hat.

"Oh, It's all right, Mr...?"

"OH! How rude of me," The white stallion extended his hoof, "Allow me to introduce myself; I am Fancy Pants."

"Well howdy do, Mr. Fancy Pants," Applejack said as she shook his hoof, "The names Applejack."

Fancy Pants looked surprised and readjusted his monocle. "Applejack? As in the 'Element of Harmony' Applejack? THE Applejack of Sweet Apple Acres and THE Applejack that stopped the tyrannical rampage of Tirek?"

Applejack tilted her hat to hide her blushed face. "Ah shucks. I didn't do it alone. I'm nothing without my friends."

"Au contraire, my dear," Fancy Pants gently took Applejacks hoof in his. "You FRIENDS are nothing without you! YOU are the binds that keep them together! YOU are the voice of reason in times of danger!" He stopped with his speech and looked around with a frown on his face. "But I see no escort with you. Are you alone tonight?"

Applejack took her hoof away from his and nodded sadly.

"WHAT?" Fancy Pants shouted.

A few heads turned in surprise including, Princess Celestia and Twilight's.

Applejack blushed out of embarrassment.

"My apologies," Fancy said, "But I am just surprised that a beautiful mare, such as yourself, has no pony for the single most important night of the year."

Applejack was completely embarrassed now.

Fancy Pants realized his mistake of words and extended his elbow to her.

"My dear Applejack, Would you do me the honor of letting me be your date for tonight?"

Applejack looked at the gesture and thought better of it. Then she thought of her promise to herself and her little sister. She nodded and took his elbow. "You may," she added.

"Splendid, my dear!" Fancy said enthusiastically. "Let's make this the best night ever!"

* * *

><p>The night was going very well for Applejack. Fancy Pants was a real gentacolts, getting her food and drinks and what not. He even taught her how to waltz, and she in turn taught him how to square dance. Since Fancy Pants know just about know who all the important ponies where, he introduced Applejack to a colt that ran the city's food surplus.<p>

"Young lady," Market Surplus said, "If you give me a share of your apples, your family will never have to worry about bits ever again."

Oh, Thank you, Mr. Surplus! With all that money, we could fix up the old barn again!"

"Young lady, with the money you and your family are about to receive, you could fix dozens of barns."

All in all, it was turning out to be a pretty good night.

After a while, Applejack and Fancy Pants walked over to the table where everypony was. Princess Celestia, Luna, and Cadence were even there, along with Apple Bloom, Scootaloo, and Sweetie Belle.

"... And so I said to him, "Really? I thought that was your rickshaw."

Everypony exploded into laughter.

"Howdy, y'all! Great night, huh?" She said excitedly.

"Hey... Hey Apple... jack..." Rainbow Dash said between gasps of air, "You just... missed... the funniest... joke every!"

"OH MY... GOSH! MY... SIDES!" Soarin tried to say.

"Tell it again, Discord," Scootaloo chimed in.

Discord cleared his throat. "So last Tuesday afternoon, I was walking down the road when..." he began, but was stopped by a hoof on his arm. "What is it, my love?" he said to Fluttershy.

"Everyponys here now," she said with a twinkle in her eyes.

"OH. Yes." he looked excited all of a sudden.

Fluttershy looked to all her friends around the table and cleared her voice. "As you all know, Discord and I..."

"...Have been seeing each other for a while now..." Discord continued.

"...And we thought..."

"...That we..."

"Let's say it together, my dear."

"OK, my love."

Fluttershy's front hoofs were intertwined with Discord's lions paw and talon.

They excitedly said together, "WE'RE GETTING MARRIED!"

A deafening silence took over the entire group.

But it didn't last long. Apple Bloom, Scootaloo, and Sweetie Belle broke the silence, along with everypony's eardrums in the vicinity, with their shrieks of glee.

"OH MY GOSH OH MY GOSH OH MY GOSH MY GOSH!" yelled Rainbow Dash as she flew across the table to hug her best friend.

"Congratulations, you two!" Spike said over the yelling. Everypony at the table were asking questions all at once.

"When did he ask?"

"How did he ask?"

"When's the wedding?"

"Was the setting romantic?"

Fluttershy put her hoofs up and yelled, "Whoa Whoa WHOA, everypony! One at a time!"

"I'm proud of you, Discord," Celestia said over the commotion, "You certainly have changed since your release. Congratulations."

"Yes," added Luna, "It seems the beast has been tamed by beauty."

"LUNA!" scolded Celestia

"No no. Luna is quite right, Tia," Discord said coming to Luna's defense. "I was a bitter and miserable creature who loved nothing

more than to torment others." He turned to his fiancée and gently raised her head to look at him, "Then I met you, my love. You changed me." He bent down and kissed her.

"Oh you," Fluttershy said and kissed him back.

A moment past when Shining Armor cleared his voice and asked, "So when's the wedding?"

"Tomorrow," Discord answered without hesitating.

There was a moment of silence as they all took this news in.

"Discord! Don't do that to them!" Fluttershy playfully smacked her fiancée's arm.

"OW! Sorry my dear. I couldn't help myself."

"We were thinking of a summer wedding," Fluttershy said.

"Oh thank goodness!" Rarity sighed with relief. "For a second there I thought I was going to have to pull an all-nighter for your wedding dress, Fluttershy."

"Oh, you don't have to worry about that," Fluttershy said.

"What do you mean?" Rarity said. "My best friend is getting married in a few months and your telling me not to worry about it!?" She was practically yelling at this point.

"NO. That's not what I meant," Fluttershy cowered at Rarity's intensity. "I just meant I don't want you to over exert yourself on the dress."

"Oh trust me, my dear," Rarity said, waving a dismissive hoof, "I do my best work under stress."

"Yeah, after about three all-nighters," chimed in Spike. He laughed at the glare his mare gave him and wrapped an arm around her. "Don't worry, babe. I'll help you out. And I'll throw you the best bachelor party ever!" he said to Discord.

"What, like mine was?" Shining asked bitterly.

The occupants at the table burst into laughter.

Fancy Pants turned to Applejack. "My, they certainly are a lively group tonight."

"Yeah. Sorry about that," apologized Applejack.

"My dear," smiled the unicorn, "What every do you have to apologize for?"

[I] That smile[/i], Applejack thought, [i]I've seen that kind of smile before[/i].

It was at that moment that Rarity finally noticed Fancy Pants and squealed in delight.

"Why hello, Fancy Pants. What brings you here to... our..." She trailed off and gasped. She backed into Spike, and his drink spilled everywhere.

"Whoa, Rarity!" he said, "What's gotten into yo..."

"YOUR NOT FANCY PANTS!" shouted the frightened unicorn. "FANCY PANTS' CUTIE MARK IS THREE CROWNS, DOT A PAIR OF SPARCLING PANTS! WHO ARE YOU?!"

Fancy Pants swore and screamed, "NOW!"

All around the hall was the sound of ponies screaming. Most of the guests burst into green flame and turned into changelings.

"What's going on?" Applejack asked.

"WHY, WHATEVER DO YOU MEAN, DEAR APPLEJACK?"

The voice that said this sounded like two ponies were asking this at the same time. Applejack turned back to where Fancy Pants was to find that he had been replaced by a tall mare, with holes in her legs and see-through-insect-like wings. Her mane and tail turned a teal color and her eyes were slits. Her skin was black and she bore no cutie mark. A small, black crown was atop her head.

Chrysalis, The Changeling Queen, cackled wickedly as her gnarled and twisted horn glowed a sickly green color as she created an aura around the four princesses and Discord.

"HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!" cackled the Queen again. "Eat, my children! Eat all the love they have to offer!"

The changelings happily obliged their queen's orders as the screams in the hall intensified.

Applejack tried to take a swing at Chrysalis but two changelings came out of nowhere and pinned her down.

"GET OFF MY SISTER!" Apple Bloom shouted, "CUTIE MARK CURSADUERS... ATTACK!" Apple Bloom's war cry filled the hall as the three fillies leapt into action. Scootaloo took two beer bottles and smashed the two ends off and wield them like knives, while Sweetie Belle levitated the chairs with her magic. Apple Bloom crouched down into a boxer's stance and the three friends, along with the rest of the group, readied themselves for a fight.

The fight, however, was short lived. The changelings were much too strong, even for Shining's force field.

"A valiant effort," scoffed Chrysalis, "But I'm afraid my changelings are too strong for any of you to handle."

"How is this possible?" Celestia asked, struggling against the magical bubble that surrounded her.

"Love, dear Princess Tia. Love conquers all!" Chrysalis spread her arms out to take the scene at hoof in. "And there is so much of it here tonight, especially at this table! My changelings and I are more

powerful then we were 5 years ago!"

"Oh yeah? Try this on for size!"

The queen turned just in time to come face-to-face with Pinkie Pie's party cannon. Chrysalis let out a scream as the cannon went off and blasted her through the air into the wall.

"HOW DARE YOU?!" shrieked the queen. Her horn glowed as she levitated pinkie off the ground and slammed her into the ceiling, then the floor, and finally flung her into the opposite wall. The wall cracked a little and Pinkie fell to the floor, not moving.

"NOOOOO! PINKIE PIE!"

Cheese Sandwich broke from the clutches of the changelings pinning him down and rushed over to her and cradled her.

"UHHH..." she moaned. "That hurt a lot."

"Pinkie Pie," Cheese said, tears in his eyes, "are you OK?"

"Not really," she whispered. "I think I'm gonna... gonna take... a... nap..." she drifted into unconsciousness.

Cheese just cradled her and cried.

"Stupid pink little fool!" Chrysalis mumbled. She raised her layered voice and yelled, "LISTEN UP, EVERYPONY! I'm more powerful than all of you put together! And just to prove that I'm here to stay," she walked over to where Applejack and the gang was being held down, "I'm going to make an example out of one of you."

She walked over to where Shining Armor was and took his chin in her hole ridden hoof.

"I could use you, but that night 5 years ago still plays in my mind, my love," Chrysalis said.

"What night?" Cadence asked. "What's she talking about, Shining?"

"Oh, he didn't tell you?" Chrysalis turned to Cadence. "The night before the wedding, Shining and I... Well, I'd tell you. But there are fillies present."

"SHUT UP!" Shining yelled. "Cadence, honey, I promise you. Nothing happened!"

Chrysalis chuckled. "Are you sure, my love? There's a reason why the Bride and Groom don't see each other before the wedding. And you were under my control?" She flashed her wicked smile and leaned down to kiss him, but he turned his face away.

"YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT LOVE IS!" He spat in her face.

Chrysalis slapped him across the face.

"SHINING!" Cadence yelled.

"GET AWAY FROM MY BROTHER!" Twilight screamed.

Chrysalis walked up to the bubble holding Twilight imprisoned. "Ah YES, Twilight Sparkle. I've heard about your new title; "The Princess of Friendship"." She burst out laughing. "AHAHAHA! That is the stupidest title for royalty I have ever heard!"

"DON'T YOU TOUCH HER," a voice said from above. Flash Sentry came soaring down towards Chrysalis with his spear. She, however, expertly sidestepped the jab and knocked Flash to the ground.

She scoffed and said, "Good try, but no"!

"FLASH!" Twilight screamed. "GET AWAY FROM HIM!" she added, but the queen was already moving on.

"You impersonated me perfectly 5 years ago, Chrysalis," Cadence said. "How did you get Fancy Pants cutie mark wrong? Are you losing your touch?"

Chrysalis answered her with a backhoof to the face.

"CADENCE!"

"Next time I stalk a worthy candidate, I'll make sure he takes off his stupid coat!"

"So... what," Cadence said, spitting out some blood, "You just guessed based off his name?"

Another backhoof.

"I could kill you, you know," Chrysalis said, grabbing Cadence's throat, "But that would be too easy." She let go and left Cadence coughing and gasping for air.

"YOU BIT..." Shining's sentence was cut short as the backhoof queen smacked him as she walked by.

"Which one, which one?" she asked to nopony in particular. She stopped in front of Apple Bloom. "OH... You are perfect, my little rebel leader."

Apple Bloom screamed and struggled against the changelings holding her down.

"Yes. You'll do nicely," chuckled the queen. She lifted the poor filly into the air for all to see.

"NO! STOP!" cried Applejack, "NOT MY SISTER!"

"STOP CHRYSALIS! PLEASE!" begged Celestia. "YOU WIN! THE KINGDOM IS YOURS! TAKE ME INSTEAD!"

"Ah, Tia. Always one for self sacrifice." The queen turned her head to give Celestia a wicked sneer. "NO. I want you all to see what happens to the young ones that defies their new ruler!"

Apple Bloom was sobbing now as Chrysalis rose her up for all to

see.

Applejack dug deep within herself. She pushed with all her might and through the changelings off of her and galloped to Chrysalis. She reared up and bucked the queen in the face just before the beam left her horn. The beam just missed Apple Bloom and shot through the ceiling. With that kick, the queen lost control of Apple Bloom and she fell into the arms of her sister, sobbing.

The queen roared in frustration. She knock Apple Bloom out of Applejack's hoofs and grabbed Applejack by her held her high in the air before throwing her down into the ground, cracking the floor beneath her.

"FINE! I'LL MAKE AN EXAMPLE OUT OF YOU INSTEAD!"

Chrysalis's Horn glowed twice as bright now as she readied her spell.

Applejack looked at her friends for the last time and gave a small smile.

"I love y'all," she managed to cough out.

The green light was unbearably bright now.

Chrysalis lowered her horn.

"DIE!"

Light exploded everywhere. But it wasn't green.

It was golden. And it was come from the outside of the castle.

Chrysalis stopped and looked up.

"What trickery is this?" she hissed.

At that moment, the magical barriers that imprisoned the four princesses and Discord disappeared.

"AHHHHH!" Discord let out as he stretched his limbs and popped his back. "My word it was cramped in there!"

Chrysalis whirled her head around. "How... How did..."

Her disbelief sentence was cut off as a boomerang collided with her face.

As the queen recovered from the assault, the four Alicorns combined their powers to blast Chrysalis off of Applejack, out the window, and off the side of the mountain.

"NOOOOOOOOO!" shrieked the queen as she fell.

Discord snapped his fingers and the all changelings in the grand hall suddenly disappeared. They reappeared in the middle of the room, dazed and without their wings. The Alicorn princesses and Discord blasted them out the window and into the night sky along with their

queen.

"APPLEJACK!"

Apple Bloom tackled her sister on the floor and curled up in a ball and wept. "I WAS SO...SO..." She tried to finish her sentence but she was weeping too hard.

"I know, sugar cube, I know," cooed Applejack, running a hoof through her sister's mane. "It's OK. Shh shsh."

Discord ran to Fluttershy and cradled her gently. "Fluttershy, my love. Are you hurt?"

She shook her head and buried it against his chest. "I'm alright now."

"Why did the force fields falter?" asked Twilight.

"Because Chrysalis hesitated," Celestia seethed. She cleared her voice as she walked over to the windows. "But now we have a more pressing matter to attend to."

Everypony walked over to the windows and saw a giant gold circle in the sky high above them.

"Look at that!" Rainbow Dash said. "It's huge!"

"OW!" Pinkie Pie shouted.

Cheese was carrying her to the rest of the group.

"PINKIE PIE!" cried the gang, "ARE YOU..."

"I'm fine! OW!" she clutched her side. "I just wanted to OW, let you all know OW, that my Pinkie Senses are telling me OW, something unbelievable is to happen!"

"Well, DUH, Pinkie!" scolded Rainbow, "It's not like a giant golden circle appears in the sky every day..."

"LOOK!" somepony said.

"Somethings coming out of it!" another yelled.

Rainbow Dash turned back to the window to see the something fall out of the circle and land on the outskirts of Ponyville.

"What was that?" asked Applejack.

"I don't know, my little ponies," Celestia said, a worried look in her eyes. "But I fear this new event is about to change our world."

4. ch 3

Chapter 3 "Welcome to Equestria, the land of talking... donkeys?"

Dark...

Darkness...

Floating... in darkness...

Alone...

â€| So... alone...

Where...

Where am I...

WHO... am I...?

"Who are you?" a voice echoed in the darkness, shaking him to his core.

Who...

Who... am I?

"What is your name?" the voice shook him again.

â€| Who am I...

A low rumbling noise began to shake the darkness.

"WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" The voice shouted the question as the rumbling grew louder.

Cracks started to appear in the darkness.

My...

My name...

The cracks grow bigger and light started to shined through them as the rumbling became a deafening roar.

â€| My name...

â€| Is...

â€| ... Zero.

* * *

><p>"AHHHHHH!"<p>

Zero woke in a panic as he flailed his arms and legs around in the dark.

"He's awake! Get the doctor!"

The voice sounded like it came from the floor on his left

"Who... who are you?" Zero asked the darkness. "Why can't I see anything?" He waved his arm around and smacked something that made

his hand hurt a lot.

"Whoa whoa WHOA there, fella. Don't go hurtin' yourself again."

This voice was just like the first one, only this one came from his right.

"OW!"

"Dear, please calm down. You'll hurt yourself even more."

"I... I can't see. Why can't I see?"

"It's OK. It's OK. There's nothing to worry about. You're safe here."

Zero felt something touch his arm and he drew back in fear.

"Oh. I'm sorry if I hurt you." The voice sounded hurt.

"It's alright, my dear. You didn't hurt him. He's just scared"

"You can't see because we wrapped your head in bandages. You had some... things attached to and under your skin."

"Don't forget the glass, or what every that stuff was."

"I... What? What are you talking about? Who are you?"

He reached up and started to fumble at the wraps on his face.

"Wait no! Not so fast!"

"AHHHH!"

The light that bombarded his eyes blinded him.

"Take it easy there, pal! It's a guy, right?"

This question confused Zero so much he stopped.

"Yes. He is a male Homo Sapiens."

Zero's eyes were starting to stop hurting. He could now make out shapes and colors.

"What are you talking about?" he asked as the world slowly came into focus. "Of course I'm a human. What else would I..."

His question was lost in his throat as he gasped. He back away as far as he could in his small bed and smacked his head against the wall. He was too stunned to have noticed the pain.

He was surrounded by... Equidae.

Unnatural multi colored Equidae.

TALKING unnatural multi colored Equidae.

And a dragon. A well dressed dragon.

And a well dressed... whatever the tall, snake like thing with the lion and bird arms was.

"Are ya OK, sugar cube?"

He looked over to find a horse with a cowboy hat staring at him.

"No. Not really. I'm surrounded by a bunch of bubble gum colored talking donkeys. Where am I?"

The room fell into silence until the tall snake, lion thing burst out laughing.

The yellow donkey next to him smacked him with a hoof.

"Ah! Hahaha! I'm sorry, my dear!" he said, rubbing his lion's arm. (Zero assumed it was a HE. It sounded like it was a he.) "It was just too funny!"

"What? What I say?" Zero was very confused.

"We're not donkeys! We're ponies!" a lavender "pony" with a horn emphatically said to his right.

"OW!"

Zero jumped at the unexpected yell and turned to see the green and purple dragon rubbing his foot.

"OW. Oh come on, Rarity, what was that for? I was laughing at what he said."

"Well, laugh it up, dragon boy," the white pony with the horn said, "You can sleep outside tonight."

"WHAT? WHY?"

"Because I said so," the white horned pony "Rarity" said, humphing and sticking her nose up into the air.

"Back to what I was saying," the lavender pony said, "We're ponies, not donkeys! Our ears are smaller, for one! Our manes are longer too! Ponies are part of the EQUIDAE family and... "

"OK! I'm sorry!" Zero threw his hand up, "I'm sorry I said donkey!"

"Good," the lavender pony seemed pleased to have gotten the point across.

"So... where am I?"

"You are in the hospital in Ponyville," the lavender pony said.

"What? Where's Pony... AH!" Zero put a hand to his head as it threatened to burst open from the pain. It finally passed and he noticed his arms where bandaged up entirety, even his fingers. He

lifted up the bed sheets to find his body was too. He also found out he was wearing a rainbow themed...thing around his midsection.

"Why am I wearing a rainbow colored...thing around my waist?"

"It's not a 'THING'! It's a dress!" Rarity shouted. "One I worked very hard on, too! Now it's ruined! All of my dresses I worked on are ruined!" She was seething and foaming at the mouth.

"Here, Rarity," the yellow pony said in a small tentative voice. She handed, ([i]hoofed?/i] thought Zero) over a glass of water.

"Oh. Thank you, Fluttershy." Her horn glowed a pinkish color and the glass was engulfed in the same color. I floated through the air to the pony's mouth.

"How did you do that?" Zero asked in wonderment.

"Magic," she said matter- of -factly. She still looked pretty steamed but she calmed down a bit at least. She walked to the far corner of the room and sat down.

"You're wearing Rainbow Dashes dress because you're...towel fell off." Fluttershy asked, blushing from embarrassment.

"I thought it was his skin," the blue rainbow haired pony chimed in.

"That's weird, Rainbow Dash," the pink one said.

Good grief, was she made from pink? Zero thought.

"Oh come on, Pinkie Pie! He came out of a glass box from the sky and was glowing! That's weird!"

"What? I fell out of the sky? I was glowing"

Twilight walked over to him and looked at him in the eyes. "Do you remember anything?"

"No. I don't."

"Do you know your name?"

Zero paused for a moment and finally said, "Zero. My name is Zero."

"Well Zero, it's nice to meet you," she extended a hoof to him. "My name is Twilight Sparkle."

He paused for again before taking her hoof. There was a pause when finally zero asked, "Soâ€|what happened to my towel, Miss Twilight Sparkle?"

Everyone in the room was suddenly interested in looking at anything else but Zero.

"Well, we were carrying you from the wreckage when... it fell off." She suddenly blushed a bright red and averted her eyes.

Zero was blushing out of embarrassment "I think you should start from the beginning, Miss Twilight Sparkle. How I came to this Ponyville in a glass box thing?"

"Please, just Twilight is fine. And of course."

She cleared her thought and sat down in the seat next to his bed.

"It happened right after the Changelings attached us."

"Changelings?"

"Yes. The Changelings are insect-like ponies that can shape shift into..."

"Come on , Twi," the orange pony with the hat interrupted her lecture, "He just woke up. I think the last thing he needs is a lesson on Changelings right now."

"Your right, Applejack," Twilight blushed a little.

"And anyway, Twi," the orange cowgirl pony continued, "The light show happened during the attack."

"Light show?"

"Yeah," the rainbow hair colored pony said, "The golden light show circle thing in the sky that your box thing fell out of."

"What?"

"You really don't remember any of it?" the pink one asked.

"What about that other human that was with you?" Rainbow Dash continued, "Do you remember him?"

"Other human?"

"The dead guy that..."

"RAINBOW DASH!" yelled Twilight.

Rainbow Dash looked down at the floor.

Nobody said anything for a minute until Zero decided to break the silence.

"OK. Would somebody please start from the beginning and tell me how I got here and where I am and who the other guy is and..."

Zero stopped and drew back a little as he finally noticed three pairs of eyes observing him intently from the end of his bed.

"Um...Hi," he said, giving the three small things little wave.

The heads popped back out of sight and reappeared right next to the left side of the bed. This time Zero really did jump.

The little yellowish one with a big red bow in its hair raised a hoof and poked him in the arm and drew its hoof back just as quickly.

"Apple Bloom!" the cowgirl pony said, "Don't be rude!"

The little ponies just kept staring at him.

Zero leaned in a little and stared right back at them.

He turned his attention back to the rest of the group. "Would someone please just tell me what happened to me and how I got here?"

"I will, sugar cube," Applejack said. She walked over to the other seat next to Zero's bed and made herself comfortable. Zero noticed her rear hoofs were bandaged up. "I can't help ya on where ya came from, but I can tell ya how we found ya."

She cleared her voice and began to talk.

* * *

><p>2 Days Ago<p>

"We need to get to Ponyville," Twilight said.

"All right, my dears," Discord said, "And Spike, Shining and fly colt, and you with the awesome hawhine t-shirt; come gather around Discord."

Everypony started to walk towards Discord while Celestia and Luna hung back.

"This is going to be fun! OW!" Pinkie said as she clutched her side.

"Easy, Pinkie," Cheese said supporting her, "Your hurt pretty badly."

"Not to worry," Discord announced and snapped his finger. Pinkie pie let go of Cheese and tested her wounds.

"Thanks, Discord!" she exclaimed as she bounced around the group.

"Come on, Pinkie," Rainbow Dash said, "Let's go!"

"I am joining you," Luna said as she, walking up to the group.

"Princess Luna?" Twilight asked, "Why are you coming?"

"I would like to see what has happened in Ponyville as well." She glanced at her sister for a moment. "My sister can handle things here."

"All right," Discord said, "Is everypony and dragon here? Good." He hunkered over the group and stretched his arms around them. "Hang on!"

Applejack closed her eyes and felt Apple Bloom's grip tighten. She heard a POOF noise and felt the air stiffen as the group was teleported.

When she opened them again, she was in front of Town Hall in Ponyville. The town looked all right, but there was something not quite right either.

"Do you...feel that?"

"Yeah. I feel it in the air."

"My hair's standing on end."

"Residual magic," Twilight announced.

"Powerful residual magic," Luna corrected. "And there is an abundance of it."

There was a pause as the group let this sink in.

"OK," Twilight said, "Does anypony have eyes on the thing that fell around here?"

Everypony scanned the surrounding area until Cadence said, "There!" and pointed towards a plume of smoke coming from the west.

"It's coming from the farm!" Apple Bloom yelled.

"Come on, y'all!" Applejack yelled. She took off through the town. The buildings flashed by and she jumped the creek in a single bound and landed with a thud but that didn't stop her.

"APPLEJACK!" somepony yelled from way back, " SLOW DOWN!"

But Applejack wasn't listening. She was in her own little world, worried about her grandmother at home. The trees blurred by, the road felt like clouds. She was practically flying down the road to home.

She jumped the fence along the north of Sweet Apple Acres and made a bee-line straight to her house. She finally noticed the house was still standing and the barn was not on fire. She burst through the back door and called for Granny. There was no answer.

"GRANNY!" she called more frantically.

"What with all the yellin' about, youngin'?"

The voice came from the top of the stairs.

"GRANNY!" applejack flew up the stairs and embraced her grandmother. "Your alright!"

"Well of course I'm alright," Granny Smith said confused, "Why wouldn't I be?"

Applejack started to tell Granny what had happened at Canterlot when Rarity's voice called from downstairs.

"Applejack! Come on, dear! The fire is this way!"

"Granny, stay here!" Applejack said as she let go of Granny and headed down the stairs.

"Whats goin' on, Applejack?" Granny Smith called after her.

"I don't know, Granny, but stay here!" Applejack called back. Right then Apple Bloom, Sweetie belle, and Scootaloo ran past the door.

"Oh no you don't!" She ran out and grabbed them. She dragged them inside the house and called out for Discord. He appeared with a pop and said, "You called?"

"Stay here with Granny and the fillies!" Applejack ordered, "Keep 'em safe!"

"What? NO!" yelled Apple Bloom, "I wanna come!"

"Yeah!" protested the other two youngsters, "Why can't we come?"

Applejack left the three filly's without a response as she ran out into the yard and towards the west orchard, where the smoke was coming from.

Applejack notice there was an assemble chain of the town's folk from her house to the source of the smoke. She ran to the front of the group to find her apple trees were engulfed in flames. She grabbed a bucket of water and throw it at the fire, but id didn't seem to help that much.

The rest of the gang finally showed up and started helping too.

"STAND BACK!"

Applejack was surprised to hear Luna using her royal canterlot voice. She hasn't used it in a long time, but it's effects on the ponies worked. The hurried back as Luna, and Twilight stepped forward. Their horns glowed as they readied their spells. The beams of magic released by the two Alicorns hit the blazing trees and froze them in ice. Cadence would then blast the frozen trees to instantly melt the ice. Soon the ground was covered in water.

The three Alicorns stood together and raised their horns to the nearest burnt tree.

"Ready?" asked Luna.

The other two nodded in unison.

Their horns glowed and the tree began to glow the same white color. The charred bark of the tree began to disappear. Leafs sprouted from the branches and apples grow once again. The princesses turned their attention to the rest of the trees and preformed the spell again and again until all the burnt trees were healed.

The rest of the group turned their attention to the foreign object protruding from the ground. It was at least half the size of a small house, maybe a large room. In the middle of the box looking thing was a golden light. Applejack walked towards the light and ran into something. She rubbed her nose and reached out a hoof and touched something. She tapped it and the sound of glass echoed her taps.

She looked inside the glass box and saw something in a doctors get up. It wasn't moving.

The light moved, catching Applejacks attention again. She took a step back, and the light came closer to where she was.

"Applejack!" somepony said, "Get away from that thing!"

The light looked liked it got smaller. It was now even with Applejack's eyes. She raised a hoof to the glass again. The light mimicked the action. A few moments passed until the light fell over. She watched as the light grew more and more dim until it was gone. What was in its place was a creature.

A tall creature with two legs and two arms.

"There's somethin' in here!" she called back to the group. They rushed forward and gasped.

"What is it?"

"I don't know."

"My goodness!"

"Sweet Celestia."

"Wow..."

Applejack recognized the last voice and looked down to see her younger sister, Sweetie Belle, and Scootaloo pressing there faces against the glass and staring at the thing.

"Apple Bloom!" she scolded, "What are you doin' here?"

"I wanted ta see!" the young filly said.

"Ya suppose to be at the house with Granny and Discord!"

"Sorry, Applejack! Its my fault!"

Applejack turned to see Discord and Granny Smith walking up to them.

"I turn my attention away for one second," he continued, "And POOF! They were gone."

"I told him those youngster's most likely went to the west orchard," Granny said. "Kids these days, always runnin' towards somethin' dangerous."

THUD.

Applejack jumped back, along with everypony else. The thing had gotten up and was pounding one thing attached to the arm against the glass. The other attached thing was clutching its neck.

"Whats it doin'?" asked Apple Bloom.

Twilight, Luna, and Cadance walked up and joined the group. The thing's pounding grow weaker.

Realizing what the thing was doing, Twilight yelled, "IT CAN'T BREATHE!"

The other ponies stared at the thing as it collapsed over, gasping.

Applejack reared up to the glass and kicked. Her legs bounced right off of it.

"What the...?"

Everypony started to pound on the glass, but met with the same result.

"MOVE, EVERYPONY!" yelled Twilight.

Everypony moved just in time as the Alicorns blasted the glass with magic. But somehow, the glass still stood firm.

"I do not understand!" Luna said, "Why is it not breaking?"

Twilight rushed over and touched the glass. "I don't know! I've never seen this kind of glass before!"

The thing in the box fell over and convulsed violently.

"Do something, Twilight!" Fluttershy pleaded.

Twilight thought frantically for a solution.

The thing stopped moving.

Twilight looked at the thing, the glass, and then the trees.

"Applejack! I need your help!"

Applejack rushed over and said, "What do ya need me to do, Twi?"

Twilight moved away from the box a bit and blasted it with magic. "KICK IT!" she yelled.

Applejack reared up to the glass box again and kicked for all she was worth. The glass shattered, splintering into small pieces that cut her hoofs.

The thing gasped and coughed for the sweetness of the air. Applejack rushed over to the thing and cradled its head.

"Easy, easy there," she said. She raised its head up slightly to

clear its windpipe. "Take it in slowly." She wiped away the glass on its face, cutting it in the process.

The thing acted like it couldn't get enough air.

"...tha...thank...you..." the thing whispered.

"What?" Applejack asked.

The thing's body went limp and its eyes closed.

Applejack heard glass cracking behind her and turned to see the gang looking at her and the creature.

"Its a human," Twilight finally said.

* * *

><p>"I said, "Thank you"?" Zero asked.<p>

"Yeah," Applejack said. "Why you were thankin' me for, I can't really say."

"What happened after that?"

"Well," Twilight said, interrupting what Applejack was going to say, "We removed the...things in your skin and lifted you out of your glass box. That's when you're... towel fell off."

"That's when I pulled out the dress and tied it on you!" announced the pink pony with the crazy hair.

"And misused a perfectly good dress in the process!" Rarity yelled from her corner.

"Luna flew off to Canterlot," continued Twilight, "And we brought you here, to the hospital."

"Wait a minute. You two healed the trees," Zero said, looking at Twilight and the other winged and horned pony, "Why didn't you just heal me then? Why bring me here?"

The two ponies exchanged a look that worried Zero a lot.

"What? What is it? Am I going to die?"

"No! No, it's not that," Cadence reassured him. "It's just that... well..." she turned to Twilight for help.

"We tried to heal you right after we removed those wires and tubes from you," Twilight began, "but your cuts wouldn't heal."

"What?"

"Every time we tried to heal you, your cuts and holes would reopen."

"Why? Why wouldn't they heal?"

"I was hoping you could tell us," Twilight looked worried. "Is there magic from your world?"

Zero thought for a moment. His head was still processing what he had just learned. "I don't know," he finally said. "I barely remember my own name. I keep trying, but that's all I can remember."

Twilight looked away, deep in thought.

Something finally clicked for Zero. He turned to the cowgirl pony and asked, "Applejack, right? You said there was someone else in the box with me."

Applejack looked down sadly. "Yea, I did, but..."

"Great!" Zero said excitedly. "Where is he? Or did you say she? This person can tell me who I am and where we came from and..."

Applejack placed a hoof on Zero's shoulder. "I'm sorry, sugar cube. He's dead."

It took a moment for this to sink in. Zero's excitement disappeared and he hung his head.

"I'm sorry, sweetie. Did ya know him?"

"I don't know. Maybe."

The whole room filled with the sound of silence.

"I have a question," a voice broke the silence.

Everyone turned in the duration of the voice; light blue pony standing next to, or rather underneath Rainbow Dash, was staring at Zero. "If your a human, then what are you doing here in Equestria?"

The door to the room flung opened and a tall, white pony came in. Everybody gasped and bowed their heads. Zero couldn't help but stare at her. Her hair was flowing and waving in non existing wind.

"That is a question I would like answer myself," she said, looking straight at him.

"Princess Celestia, please!" a voice said behind her. "The decontamination process hasn't been completed yet! We don't know if..."

Princess Celestia's horn glowed a blinding yellow flash and filled the room with its light. Zero felt a slight burning sensation throughout his body.

"There," the princess of the sun announced, "They are clean." She walked right up to Zero and glared hard at him. "Now I will ask you again, human. What are you doing in my Equestria?"

Ch.4- The man with no name

Zero tried to form a sentence, but the words in his brain would not come out of his speaking hole in his face. He couldn't look away from her intense burning eyes, either. Who was this completely and utterly terrifying tall horse?

"Sister, please!"

In his peripheral vision, Zero saw a dark bluish shape walking in after the scary white horse.

"Sister, please! Calm down!" the dark blue pony pleaded again. She sounded winded, like she had been chasing her sister.

"I will ask you again, human," the burning eye's said, ignoring her sister and walking from the foot of Zero's bed to the side of it and leaned in closer, seething her question into a whisper, "What are you doing here?"

"I...I don't..." Zero tried to say, but her eyes seemed to burn into his mind and soul.

"Princess Celestia?"

The tall white pony turned her blazing gaze towards Twilight Sparkle. Twilight looked as terrified as Zero felt.

"What is it, my most faithful student?" The white pony's gaze softened a little but there was still an edge to her voice; a sharp edge.

Zero took this opportunity to plan an escape. He wasn't going to let the tall pony with the wavy mane stare at him with those blazing eyes again. He looked at the doorway to find it was still opened and that no one was in the way.

He slowly moved the covers and inconspicuously moved his legs to the left side of the bed.

"Why are you here, Princess Celestia?" twilight asked.

Zero carefully moved his feet towards the floor.

"I am here to look at the situation,"

"What situation? What do you mean?"

Celestia moved away from the bed and Zero shot towards the door.

A shriek filled the room as Zero's foot stepped on something small and squishy. He lost his footing and tumbled to the ground and collided with a chair, sending bright spots dancing all around him. The heart monitor and IV bag were dragged along with him across the room and over the bed. The bag burst, showering the bed with its contents and the monitor bounced off the bed and crashed to the ground.

"Sweetie Belle!" Rarity ran from her corner and comforted the little filly.

Celestia's head spun towards Zero. She walked up to the human on the floor, cradling his head.

"What do you think you are doing, human?" she yelled at him angrily, "Trying to escape? You hurt one of my subjects!" She pointed her violently colored horn right into his face. Zero saw the anger in her eyes and it terrified him to the core.

"THAT IS IT, TIA!" The dark bluish pony head-butted her sister in her side and the magical energy blast from the horn missed Zero by millimeters and completely incinerated the wall behind him.

"You are out of control, sister!" Luna shoved her sister towards the door, but Celestia side stepped and circled around her. Luna's horn glowed blue as she magically grabbed her sister and flung her outside the room.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING, LUNA! LET GO OF ME!"

"WE NEED TO TALK, SISTER!" she yelled as she trotted after her and slammed the door behind her.

The occupants of the room were in shocked silence at what just happened. The only sound came from the human, slightly groaning from the floor.

"Wow. I've never seen Celestia THAT angry before," Cadence commented, finally breaking the silence.

"Neither have I," Twilight said.

Applejack walked over to the whimpering human and comforted him. "Ya'll OK, sugar cube?"

Zero was rocking side to side, holding the back of his head. "Notâ€|really. Isâ€| is theâ€|little oneâ€|OK?"

"My leg hurts a little. Other than that, I'm fine. Rarity, get off me!"

Rarity was hugging her so tightly she was turning a slight shade of purple.

"Are you sure your fine, Sweetie Belle? I could get the doctor to look you over an..."

"I said I'm fine! You're the one killing me! Don't squeeze so hard!"

"I'm sorry I... stepped onâ€| youâ€| little one." Zero said in between gasps of air and rocking back and forth. "Gosh... stupid chair..."

"I'm so sorry about Princess Celestia, Zero." Twilight said, "I don't know what's gotten into..."

The door crept open and Luna stuck her head in. "Twilight Sparkle? Would you come out here for a moment, please?"

"Um... sure." Twilight walked passed everyone and out into the hallway. The door closed with a soft click, leaving the room in an awkward silence. It didn't last long, though. A caramel colored pony with a doctor's coat on and a stethoscope around its neck came bursting through the door.

"What is going on in here?" he exclaimed, surveying the scene.

"It's OK, Mr. Doctor Pony," Zero said as he sat up and ripped the IV and heart monitor tube from his arm, "I just fell and bumped my head."

"Let me see."

The doctor pony came over and grabbed Zero's head, turning it this-way-and-that as he unwrapped the bandages on it.

"Well, there doesn't seem to be any external cranial damage, but we'll take an X-ray just to be sure. Nurse?"

A white pony with a nurse's cap came in as the doctor pony kept talking.

"Now the cuts and holes on your face is another..." The doctor was interrupted as Zero tried to back up as far as he could. He soon calmed down as he realized the white pony wasn't nearly as tall or scary as Celestia was.

"Are you OK, sir?" the nurse asked.

"Not really, no," Zero said. "I wake up to find talking candy colored donk...ponies around me and I have no idea where I am. THEN a tall scary white horse comes in here and starts yelling at me and almost kills me!"

"I was wondering about that," the nurse pony said, turning to the doctor pony, "Why is Princess Celestia and Luna here, Doctor Horse?"

"I have no idea, but Princess Celestia's presence here is upsetting the hospital."

"What do you mean, Doc?" Rainbow Dash asked.

"Well," he began, thinking of the right words to use, "She's royalty upset for some reason and her mood is affecting the other patients. Not to mention the damage done to my hospitalâ€¦" he trailed off as he noticed the heart monitor shattered on the floor. "And my equipment! What happened here!?"

"Oh. That." Zero rubbed the back of his head sheepishly. "Sorry about that, Doc. I was making a run for the door and I stepped on the little one over there and pulled the monitor to the ground."

"Those things are expensive!" Doctor Horse said as the nurse tended to Sweetie Belle. "Now we have to place an order for another one!"

"It's OK, Doc," Discord said, "I've got this." He snapped his finger and the monitor reassembled itself instantly and righted itself on

its stand. The spilled liquid on the sheets floated into the newly repaired IV bag like it was never spilled in the first place.

"There we are, good as new," Discord said satisfied with his work.

"Oh. Well, thank you, Mr. Discord," the doctor said, "That was very kind of you."

"Not a problem."

"Your hoof is sprained a little," the nurse said to Sweetie Belle, "But it'll heal just fine."

"Thank you, Nurse," Rarity said, squeezing her sister tightly again, "I don't know what I would do if anything ever happened to her!"

"Rarity!" muffled the small filly.

"Wait a minute, Doc" Zero announced, "You said I had cuts and holes on my face?"

The doctor nodded and added, "But they are minor lacerations. I don't know why our healing spells don't work"

"Could someone hand me a mirror, please?"

Discord snapped his fingers again and a small mirror popped into existence and floated down to Zero. He took it and saw a strange person looking back at him. The person in the mirror had olive skin and was riddled with cuts and holes. His blue eyes staring back at him were filled with something.

Like they wanted something to see

Something

Something

Zero clutched his head as the pain took him over. It felt nothing like what the chair gave him a few minutes ago. After what felt like forever the pain finally subsided and Zero found the whole group looking at him.

"Are you oh" The doctor pony began to ask, but he stopped and just stared at him.

"What?" Zero asked. "What are you staring at?"

"Your eyes," Fluttershy said in awe.

Zero quickly turned back to the mirror to see what the soft spoken one was talking about. "What? What about them?"

"They were blue a second ago," Rainbow Dash commented, "Like, REALLY blue."

"Really?" Zero asked in disbelief, "How?"

The room went silent as the others tried to form an answer for the confused human.

Finally the nurse pony broke the silence. "Well, maybe it has something to do with the Iris fluids."

"The color of the eyes can't change because of the fluid," Doctor Horse corrected her. "When you're angry or sad, you're pupils dilate and change slightly."

"I know that," the nurse huffed at her boss, "But I'm pretty sure blue eyes can't just change from blue to electric azure blue."

"Maybe it's different with him. It could be for a number of reasons!"

The door opened again and Twilight stepped into the room with Luna close behind. "Sorry to interrupt, Doctor, but we have a question for you. Is the hum â€¦ I mean, Zero, ready toâ€¦" She stopped as she finally read the room. "What? What happened?"

"Zero's eye's changed, Twilight," Applejack said.

"What? How?"

"We were just discussing that when you walked in, Princess." Doctor Horse said with a bow. He looked around and asked, "Where is Princess Celestia?"

"Princess Celestia had to go back to Canterlot forâ€¦ something," Twilight said. "Back to what I was asking; Is Zero well enough to move around?"

"Oh. Yes," Doctor Horse took a look at his notes. "As far as we know he's recovered enough to travel, but he just received a head injury from that chair he hit. We wanted to run an X-ray on him to seeâ€¦"

"I'm sorry, Doctor Horse," Twilight interrupted, "If Zero can travel now, then we have to go."

"Go?" Zero asked. "Go where?"
Twilight walked over to Zero and helped him to his feet.

"We're taking you home."

* * *

><p>The walk to the front doors was strange to Zero. Every pony he passed by had a look of shock and awe as they looked at him. He realized that not only was he 'Not from around these parts' (as the little pony with the big red bow said), he was also still covered in bandages from head to toe. He started to take them off, but soon realized the only thing keeping him decent WERE the bandages. That and a very brightly makeshift rainbow colored skirt thing that kept his man hood under wraps.<p>

"I'm sorry I ruined your dress, Rainbow Dashie," he said, turning to her as she lazily flew above the entourage.

"Its Dash," she corrected him, "Just Dash. And anyways, it's no a big deal."

"To YOU it isn't, Rainbow Dash," a voice said from the back of the group, "But I spend two hours making that dress! I used my most expensive, and hard to get I might add, rainbow dyed fabric and gold thread! AND I used just the right amount of sequence to make it shine! AND Iâ€|"

"I think we get it, babe."

"YOU can be quiet, dragon breath!"

"What in Equestria did I do to you?"

There was the sound of a little huff before she continued. "I'm still mad at you. AND you're still sleeping outside tonight."

Zero tuned out the background noise as he walked to the doors. He suddenly stopped at the foot of the door and stared out the little window.

"What is it, Zero?" The tall blue pony with the wavy hair trotted over to him and looked at him. "Is there something wrong?"

Zero hesitated before answering her. "Iâ€| don't know, Princessâ€| Luna, was it?"

She gave him a small nod and waited for him to continue.

"I justâ€|feel likeâ€| I don't know how to describe itâ€| like I shouldn't step out these doors. Like stepping out would be a bad thing."

She walked closer to him and looked deeply into his eyes. "I know that you must be scared and unsure of everything right now, but to find the answers you seek, whether they be good or bad, you must take the first step."

Zero broke eye contact with her dark blue eyes and stared back at the doors. He took a deep breath and placed a hand on them. "999 miles left to go," he muttered with a half smile.

The light from the outside world blinded him and he staggered back a little, rubbing his eyes to hurry them up with their adjusting thing. What he saw when they finally were adjusted absolutely stunned him.

There was so much color everywhere! The ground was hard yet loose on his feet. He took off the bandages on them and felt the dry dirt road. He ran over to the green stuff next to the road and was shocked to feel it wasn't hard and rough, but soft. He felt something brush up against his back but turned to find his companions where nowhere near him. He opened his arms to feel the wind for the first time in his life. He closed his eyes and breathed in deeply. He looked up and saw a sight that completely robbed him of his words.

It was big; as far as the eyes can see in every direction.

It was blue.

It wasâ€¦|

"BEAUTIFUL."

He fell backwards with a thud with his eyes still fixated on the beauty above.

"ZERO!"

Zero heard the sound of the others coming towards him.

"Are you ok? What happened?" Twilight asked with a hint of worry in her voice.

Zero addressed her without looking away from the sky. "I'm sorry to make you all worried about me, but I'm fine."

"What was all that prancin' and dancin' around a second ago?"

Zero looked up to find the pony to that voice and said, "Come here for a moment, Applejack."

She hesitated for a moment, but eventually came over and twisted her head upwards.

"Tell me, Applejack, What do you see?"

She sounded confused at first but said, "Well, I reckon we're both seein' the sky."

"Yes, but I'm seeing something else. I'm seeing a beauty I have never seen before."

"Never? Really?"

"What do you mean, Zero?" Twilight asked. "Are you getting your memories back?"

His serenity smile disappeared into a frown as Zero thought.

"Iâ€¦| no. I don't. It's more of aâ€¦| feeling then anything else. "

A couple of minutes passed until he got up and said, "Ok. Let's take me home." He started to walk off in a direction before realizing he had no idea where he was going.

"It's this way Zero," Twilight said, heading down the dirt road.

They all walked through the town and everyone who saw Zero looked at him the same way the ponies did in the hospital. Fillies would gasp and hid behind their parents and the parents would hug their little ones and run off.

"Why are they so scared of me?" Zero leaned down and asked Applejack.

"Well, you're aâ€¦| human, wasn't it?" Rainbow Dash looked to Twilight

for confirmation. "You kinda stick out around here."

"Plus, ya fall out of the sky and almost set my whole orchard on fire." Applejack commented.

Zero rubbed the back of his head sheepishly, "Yeah, sorry about that. I'll make it up to you somehow, Applejackie."

"It's Applejack, not-"

"The only thing you're doing is taking what you can from your box and going back home," Twilight said, interrupted.

"All right. What did you guys do to my stuff, by the way?" Zero asked.

"We didn't. We just left everything there."

"Everything?" Zero asked in disbelief. "You left everything out so anyone could steal it?"

"There are guards surrounding Sweet Apple Acres to make sure that doesn't happen," Twilight said, "but it's just a precaution. No pony would go near there after what happened."

Zero thought for a moment before asking, "What about the other human that was with me? Adam. Where is his body?"

Twilight averted her eyes as she answered the human's question. "I'm sorry, Zero. We just left him there."

Zero was stunned. "What? Why would you just leave the body out in the open like that?"

"We covered the body. We didn't want to risk an infection of some kind. That's why we took you to the hospital to decontaminate you and use."

By this point the group had reached the edge of town and started to make their way to Sweet Apple Acres. Zero ran off down the road, not entirely sure where he was going. He heard the others call for him but he didn't care. If he could just see this man's face, maybe he could remember who he is.

He rounded the bend in the road and saw a few ponies dressed in gold colored armor standing at the opening to the farm.

"Hey! What are-"

Zero hurdled over the fence and ran straight through the trees as he searched for his box and the man. He wasn't sure where he was going, so he just ran. Ran for all he was worth.

A few minutes later, he came upon a large group of guards standing around a very large tent. They all turned towards him with brandished spears and swords, ready for a fight.

"HALT! WHO ARE YOU?"

"STAND DOWN, CAPTAIN!"

A voice from behind Zero stopped the guards in their tracks. They all snapped their hoofs together and saluted to the advancing figure.

"Princess Twilight! Princess Luna!" The one in the front of the group approached Twilight And Luna and bowed a bit. "We didn't know you where coming so soon."

"At ease, Captain," Twilight said, "He's with me." She turned to the rest of the guards, dismissed them all, except for the Captain. "Flash," she said in a hushed tone, "Stand guard, please, until we're all done."

"As you wish, my Princess," he said, before sneaking a kiss onto her cheek and walking to the side of the entrance. Twilight's cheek flashed a bright red before heading into the tent, followed by Zero and the gang.

The box that had brought Zero to this strange land loomed over him. He felt a crushing presence emulating from the glass and the contents within. Walking up to the thing took all of his will power.

He was afraid of it, and he didn't know why.

"Zero?"

He turned to see Twilight walking up to him and put a reassuring hoof on his shoulder.

"Zero? Are you ok?"

"Iâ€¦ I can't explain it. Twilight," he began, "I know I should know thisâ€¦ this thingâ€¦ but I don't. I can't remember."

"Maybe this will help you," Twilight said. She walked over to the tarp just inside of the box that Zero totally missed. She lifted it and Zero came face to face with the other human.

Zero bent down to take a closer look at him. The man's white coat was stained with blood and his glassy brown eyes stared blankly at the ceiling of the tent. A small smile played on the edges of his mouth. Zero said the name on the tag he wore.

"ADAM."

Zero stared at the name tag, willing it to give Zero the answers he needed.

"SOOOOOOO," The one called Pinkie Pie hopped over and looked over Zero's shoulder at the man. "Do ya remember anything? ADAM? What a weird name."

"PINKIE PIE!"

"OOPS! I'm so sorry, Zero" Her hair and tail somehow deflated like all the air was let out. The rest of the group wondered around, looking at this and that.

"No no, it's ok, Pinkie Pie," Zero said, trying to make her feel

better. "I don't remember anything new, including him."

He looked back to the name tag and frowned.

"Wait. I remember something."

Zero felt 14 pairs of eyes turn towards him. He ran a hand over the man's eyes, closing them.

"A name is just a name without deeds and memories behind it."

The silence that followed this statement was defining. Zero felt something wet run down his cheek, but he made no effort to stop it. Finally someone said, "Hey, what's this thing?" A screeching metallic sound filled the air and Zero felt like his head was caving in.

He felt the cold of a metal table as the saw cut into his flesh, ripping him to pieces. The sound of his screams echoed off the walls of his cage. His days were filled with pain and suffering. His pleas fell on deaf ears as the shadows above him closed in. He wishes they would stop. He wishes they would stop saying his name.

Zeroâ€

Zeroâ€

Zeroâ€

"ZERO!"

Zero's eyes flew open as the sound as the sound of his name jarred him back to reality. He looked around at all the techno colored ponies and cried. He cried and gasped for air and cried some more. He grabbed the nearest pony and hugged them for all he was worth.

"THANKYOUTHANKYOUTHANKYOUTHANKYOUTHANKYOUTHANKYOUTHANKYOU!" he sobbed over and over again.

"What are ya thankin' me for?" Applejack asked, but Zero was already running out the tent.

He threw his arms out as far as they would go and yelled into the sky as loud as he could,

"MY NAME IS ZERO! AND I AM FREE!"

6. Ch 5

Ch. 5 â€" No place like it

The group looked on in shocked silence as the human went from crying to laughter, then back again. He went on like this until he finally collapsed to his knees and screamed at the sky for the final time. Twilight walked over and hugged him.

"I'm sorry," Zero said, wiping his face and returned the hug. "I'm sorry you had to see all that."

"No, it's ok," Twilight said, "It's ok to cry. Do you feel better now?"

Zero let go of Twilight and stood up, taking a deep breath and stretching his arms out as far as they would go.

"Yeah. Yeah, I feel much better now that I am free of that box," he said, gesturing towards the tent.

The rest of the group came up to him at this point and someone asked him what he meant by free. Zero took another deep breath so he wouldn't start shaking again.

"Well, I can't remember everything. It's all just bits and pieces. The little that I do remember is THAT box!" He stretched his arms wide again and looked to the sky. "For the first time ever, I can see the world outside of THAT box."

"But, sugar cube," Applejack said, resting a hoof on his leg, "This aint YOUR world."

Zero looked down at her with sad eyes. "I wish it was. It's beautiful here."

"It is indeed, human," Luna said, "But my sister has ordered your return to your own world with as much of your belonging as you can carry with you."

"But why?" Zero asked. "Cant I stay a little longer?"

"Princess Celestia says you don't belong here, Zero," Twilight chimed in. "She said you have to leave immediately."

"How does she expect me to carry THAT with me?" Zero said, gesturing to his glass box. "And how AM I getting home, anyway?"

"I've been wondering that myself," Rarity piped up. The rest of the group nodded at this comment.

"We will worry about your box later," Twilight said, her horn suddenly glowing. "As for how you're getting home; let me worry about that."

She closed her eyes and the glow of her horn intensified for a second. There was a small flash and a brown book with a sun on its cover appeared in midair, hovering in front of her. There were two more flashes as a bottle of ink and a quill appeared besides it. She sat down as she opened the book and began to write.

"I'm going to sent Sunset a message telling her your coming. Go and get your things, Zero."

Zero wondered how writing in a book would let the sunset know he was coming, but he didn't voice it. He was, after all, in a world of techno colored talking ponies with magic and could fly.

He walked into his shattered home and looked around for the first time again. Torn or burnt books and pages were scattered all over the place, along with broken pieces of various medical equipment. He saw

AWAY! GO AWAY!"

"ZERO!"

Zero opened his eyes to find the group over him, looking at him with concern and shock.

"Are you ok, Zero?"

"Whaâ€|? What happened?"

"Well, one minute you were just standing next to that table looking thing-" Fluttershy said.

"-And the next, you were on the ground rolling all over the place screaming!" Rainbow Dash finished.

"Iâ€|I did?" Zero asked. He tried to get up, but immediately regretted the action. He fell back down and cradled his head. His whole body ached.

"Whoa there!" Applejack said. "Easy there. Don't get up too fast. Just rest for a second."

Zero nodded and waited for the world to stop spinning.

"What happened, Zero?" Spike asked.

"Iâ€| I don't know. I was suddenly bound on the table, and I heard voices."

"Voices?" Rarity asked. "Who's? What did they say?"

"I don't know. All it said was to 'hold him down'. Then shadows tried to do just that. Then I woke up."

"Is that why you were screaming?"

Zero nodded, than shook his head.

"No. No I was yelling because the voices were coming after me while I was sleeping."

"What voices? What's going on in here?"

Twilight came in and Applejack relayed everything that happened.

"I believe that Zero had another vision of his fragmented past," Luna said.

"What triggered it?" Twilight said in a businesslike manner.

Luna tilted her head towards the table and Twilight walked up to it. She touched it and examined it. She walked around it and her horn glowed purple as she examined it with her magic.

Finally she walked over to Zero and said, "It looks like an ordinary examiner's table. What happened, Zero?"

"I don't know. I just touched it andâ€| andâ€|" Zero clutched his

head again and felt a tear roll down his cheek.

"I'm sorry, Zero," she said, "I didn't mean to-"

"No no. It's ok, Twilight," Zero said, wiping his face with his arm. "I know you're just trying to help."

There was an awkward silence between them when Twilight suddenly said, "Oh yeah! Sunset Shimmer said she'll be waiting for you by the school."

"Sunset Shimmer? What school?" Zero had no idea what she was talking about.

"Canterlot High. You don't remember?"

Zero had no idea what she was talking about and shook his head.

"Dang. I was hoping the name would jog your memory or something." She sighed and held out her hoof to Zero. "Are you ready to go?"

Zero took the helping hoof and stood up. "I think so. Let me take one more look around before we go."

He walked around a bit more without having a painful flashback memory thing. He grabbed what little that wasn't burnt or broken and placed them inside a backpack he found. He moved a piece of the piano to find some clothing underneath.

"Huhâ€¦" Zero said.

A little orange filly Pegasus with a purplish mane came over and stared at the clothing in his hands.

"What is it? What'cha find?" she asked.

Zero brushed off the filly to find it was a pair of underwear and jeans.

His face suddenly felt hot for some reason and he said simply, "It's just my clothes."

He raised his voice a little so the others could hear. "Could I get a little bit of privacy here, please?"

The others nodded and began to walk out of the tent when Discord snapped his talons and a folding screen appeared in-between Zero and the others. Zero scooted the little filly out towards the entrance before untying the makeshift-rainbow-skirt-thing and the bandages around his midriff and legs.

Man, Twilight and the doctor were right. I do have a lot of cuts and holes all on me.

The cuts were recent, but the holes were all ready scabbed over. He counted the scabs and found that each leg had about 20 small and big holes in his skin, mostly around his joints. They didn't hurt as he pulled the underwear on, but the roughness of the jeans slightly irritated him. He began to remove the wraps on his arms, but found

them to be more prominent than his legs were and wrapped them back up.

When he was done, he stuffed the rainbow skirt into his backpack and swung his shoulders. He looked around one last time before finally gave up on the hope of finding a pair of shoes and began to walk toward the opening of the tent when something caught his eye. He walked over and knelt by the body of Adam. He saw a small lump in his front pocket that he hadn't noticed before. He reached in to it and his fingers gripped the edges of something. He pulled out a small rectangular black thing with a shiny surface on one side.

He pressed one of the buttons on the side and the screen lit up with a beautiful picture of a golden field. The man called Adam was standing in the middle of the picture with a little girl in a white sun dress in his arms. Standing next to him was a beautiful woman in the same kind of sun dress as the little girl was wearing. She had green eyes and long, glossy black hair that was blowing in the breeze as the picture was taken. He noticed the little girl had the same color hair as the woman did, but her eyes were the same as the man. Zero looked to Adam and realized what the picture meant. He raised Adam's left hand to see a golden ring on his third finger.

Zero's heart fell as he placed the phone and ring into his pocket and scooped the body up into his arms. He stood and carefully wiped a tear from his eye as he walked out of the tent.

Twilight was the first to see him and began to say something but stopped when she noticed what he was holding.

"I would like to bury him," Zero announced.

"Zero, I don't think-"

"No, Twilight. I have to do this," he said a little angrily. "I've killed a married man. He deserves to be buried. "

Luna stepped up besides Twilight and said, "I believe what Twilight was going to say was she did not think there is a problem to that request."

Twilight turned to Luna with a questioning look. "What? No I wasn't. I was going to say I don't think that's such a good idea, considering Princess Celestia said that Zero has to take everything with him back to his world and-"

Luna raised a hoof to silence Twilight and said, "I know what my sister said, Twilight Sparkle, but I do not believe that she is right.

"But-"

"I will speak with my sister when this is all done," Luna continued, "But I do not think it is right, morally and lawfully, that Zero should take the body back to his world and parade him through the streets."

Twilight looked stunned, then she lowered her head with her ears against her head.

"You're right, Luna. I didn't even think about that." She looked up at zero and apologized for not thinking about him.

He just nodded and asked where the cemetery was.

Twilight lead the group to the outskirts of the town and found the grounds keeper. She asked where a vacant spot was and after he got over his shock at the sight of Zero, pointed to a piece of land at the end of the cemetery. They walked pasted head stone after head stone and Zero tried to read the name off the ones that were still readable.

Glitter Storm, Hacky Sack, Snow Drop, Windy Sky, Thunder Bread, Sunset Dream, Emerald, Violet Rain, Scarlet Jewelâ€| what strange names, he thought to himself.

When they finally reached a spot, Zero placed Adam on the ground and looked around.

"Does anyone have a shovel?" he asked.

Twilight's horn began to glow and the ground next to the body shook, than a perfectly rectangular hole appeared with the dirt in a neat little pile right next to it.

Discord snapped his talons and a wooden casket formed around Adam with a creaking sound.

"This casket will never degrade nor rot," He said solemnly, bowing his head in respect. I know that's a small comfort, but-"

"Thank you, Discord," Zero interrupted. "It's nice. Thank you."

Discord nodded and stepped back as Twilight came up to Zero.

"You've been through a lot today," she said. "I didn't think you needed to add grave digging to the list."

Zero knelt down and wrapped his arms around her neck and thanked her for her kindness.

Twilight stepped back a little after the hug and asked, "Would you like to say a few words be for weâ€|"

Zero nodded before Twilight could finish.

He turned to the casket and placed a hand on top of it.

"I'm sorry," he began.

"I'm sorry I don't remember you. I'm sorry I took you from your home and family." He pulled out the ring and held it in the palm of his hand, feeling the coldness of the metal.

"I promise to find your wife and give this to her. I promise to come back for you."

He placed the ring back into his pocket and turned away from the casket. He turned his head slightly to say, "I'm sorry I don't

remember you, but I will find you somewhere up here," he said, tapping his head. "I promise you that."

He turned away from the casket and nodded to Twilight. She sniffed and lowered Adam into the grave. Luna levitated the pile of dirt over Adam. Discord snapped his fingers again and a tombstone the occupants name on it appeared at the head of the fresh grave, a wreath of roses laid on it.

"Ok, Twilight Sparkle," Zero said, "I'm ready to go home."

She nodded and began to walk in the direction of the town.

There wasn't much side conversations as the group passed walked down the road. They passed a few Ponies on the way to town. They stared at Zero, but he just ignored them.

"Hey, Zero?"

Zero looked down to see the small Pegasus with a purplish pink mane looking up at him.

"I'm sorry for your loss," the little one said.

"My too, kid. Me too."

They walked in silence again as they reached the edge of town.

"OH MY GOODNES!"

The outburst startled Zero and he whirled around to find that Rarity was looking at him.

"What the heck, Rarity?" Spike said, grasping his chest. "You scared the heck out of me!"

"I just thought of something!" Rarity cried again. "You can't go home in that!" She gestured towards his bandaged chest.

"What?"

Zero looked down to that Rarity was levitating a flexible measuring tape towards him and began to wrap it around his chest.

"Where did you get tape, Rarity?" Spike asked.

"A lady is always prepared. Please lift your arms, dear."

Zero obliged and held his arms out. He noticed that Rarity wasn't writing any of the measurements down.

After a minute, Rarity nodded her head and the tape floated into her purse. "All right, I have what I need." She turned and headed down the street.

"Where are you going, Rarity?" Twilight asked.

"To my shop," She called back. "I cannot have Zero walking in his home town half naked. I will meet you at your castle, Twilight. Don't start without me." She disappeared around the corner with Spike in

toe.

Twilight sighed and started to walk again.

When they finally reached the Crystal Castle, the guards opened the big double doors for them. To Zero, the whole place looked as if it grew out of the ground, like some kind of crystal tree castle tree house thing. They walked up the spiral staircase and into a large hallway. The stone floor was cooled to his feet, but not uncomfortably. There were scenic pictures of mountains and lakes and such on the walls of the halls.

"Wow, Twilight," Cadance said, "Your castle looks beautiful now."

"Thanks, Cadence," Twilight said. "The new decorator really did a number on this place."

"I'd say," chimed in Applejack. "Remember when we tried to decorate this place for ya, Twilight?"

Pinkie Pie bounced at up and clapped her hoofs together. "Ha ha! Yeah. That was so much fun!"

"Yeah, but next time Pinkie, lay off on the party cannons a bit." Rainbow Dash said.

"Yes. Please, Pinkie Pie," added Twilight, "The castle staff keeps finding more and more."

"Really? I'd of thought you found them all by now."

"How many did you hide?"

"I lost count at around 50."

As they talked about the absurd amount of "party cannons", they entered through a set of doors into a library. There were shelves and stacks of books everywhere, higher than Zero. Everyone wondered off to the shelves and piles and talked amongst themselves as the waited for Rarity to return. Zero went over to one of the piles and scanned a few titles.

THE HISTORY OF THE CUPCAKE: A BIOGRAPHY OF THE GREAT PASTRY CHEF

THE GROUND, JEWELS, AND YOU

EQUESTRIA: A HISTORY

TAKE IT BIT BY BIT: FINANCES FOR ALL AGES

CATastrophe: PUN INTENDED 2- THE SQUEAKWEL

MANE TODAY IS A MANE TOMORROW: SIMPLE HAIR STYLES FOR ANY DAY OF THE WEEK

DEAD TO REALLY DEAD: HOW TO NOT BUCK UP A RELATIONSHIP

MAGIC 101

IN THE SKY FOR THE-

"I'm back!"

Rarity came galloping in with Spike running in after her, puffing and puffing.

"Huffâ€| hufâ€| wowâ€|Rarâ€|that's theâ€|fastestâ€|I've everyâ€| seenâ€| you makeâ€|somethingâ€|"

"Here you are, Zero." Rarity said, levitating a neatly folded piece of clothing. He put down the history book and took the blue shirt in his hands. He took off his backpack and pulled the shirt on.

"Well, how do I look?" Zero asked the group.

Rarity tilted her head slightly and said, "Very nice, dear, but aren't you going to take off your bandages?"

Zero was hopping she didn't notice that. He took his shirt off and began to remove the wraps on his chest, but left the ones on his arms. He then put the small bundle into his backpack and pulled the shirt back on. It felt nice and it fit perfectly.

"Thank you, Rarity. I love it."

"All right, ponies," Twilight said. "Stand back."

As the others gathered around her, Twilight levitate the book with a sun on the cover up to the top of some machine thing hooked up to a large mirror. The book lit up with a purple light and the energy from it worked its way across the contraption through tubes and rollers. Every one shielded their eyes as the purple light shot back to the book, then down to the mirror's surface.

Zero lowered his arm to see the mirror's reflective surface was replaced by a swirling vortex of pink.

"Ahhhhh," Discord cooed, looking over his palm tree themed sunglasses, "So this is where you've been hiding that mirror."

"Don't you even think about it, Discord," Luna said in a threatening voice.

Discord looked shocked. "What? Me? Go to another world and create all kinds of chaos and mayhem? Perish the thought!"

"Ok, Zero," Twilight said, walking over to him. "Sunset Shimmer is waiting for you and she'll do what she can to help to find out who you are."

She led him to the mirror and stood up to look him in the eyes.

"Are you ready to go home?"

Zero felt nervous but nodded anyway. He took one last look at the group around him.

"Thank you for all you've done," he said. The group answered back

with your welcomes and good lucks.

"Oh! Rarity! I almost forgot!"

He swung the back pack off again and took out the rainbow dress and held it up to her.

"Thank you for letting me use this."

"You are quite welcome, Zero." she said, levitating it to Spike, who held it away at arms lengths.

Zero walked over to Applejack and knelt down to her eye level.

"And thank you for saving me, Applejack."

She tipped her hat to hide her bushing face. "Ah shucks, you would've done the same for me." She tipped her hat back and looked him deep into his eyes. "I hope you fine what you're lookin' for, Zero"

"I hope so, too."

He stood up and walked back to the mirror and stood before it. He took a deep breath and smiled at the thought of home.

HOME.

He stepped forward to the mirror

And slammed his face against its surface.

End
file.